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MULTIPLE Choices

Planning Your Career for the 21st Century

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Career Practitioners

This book is written for people who are making career-related decisions. It will help you to:

- understand how career development is a continuous process with a series of choices
- discover the difference between jobs, occupations and roles
- identify your positive assets and characteristics (e.g. skills, interests, values, beliefs and knowledge)
- consider a variety of work alternatives (e.g. full-time, part-time, multi-tracking, job sharing, consulting and talent pooling)
- explore the skills, knowledge and values related to specific industries
- understand the importance of setting short-term goals
- connect with further information and resources.

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CHAPTER 1

Career building

"What do you want to be when you grow up?" Were you asked that age-old question when you were younger?

It's an unfair question, because it sets up an unrealistic expectation: that you will choose an occupation, train for it and do that sort of work for the rest of your life. In reality, most people work in a number of different occupations during their lifetimes. We change, our circumstances change and so do the work options open to us. Sometimes we choose to make career-related changes for our own reasons; sometimes we are required to change by forces beyond our control.

No matter your age or stage in life, you will undoubtedly have to make many career-related decisions in the future. The purpose of this book is to help you make sound decisions in an environment that is constantly changing. More specifically, the book's purpose is:

1. to show you how to take an active role in planning your career, instead of simply waiting for things to happen
2. to give you a better understanding of yourself and what you want and need in your work/life
3. to help you discover new, viable career options
4. to show you how to gain more control over your life by anticipating how change and chance could affect your plans.

CAREER BUILDING IN A CONSTANTLY CHANGING WORLD

Career building is an ongoing activity. Planning and goal setting are part of career building, but so is adjusting to and taking advantage of things that happen in an unplanned way. Our dreams and desires, as well as the opportunities open to us, are subtly changing all the time. Sometimes, they can change quite dramatically over a short period of time.

Coping with change often requires taking your career in a different direction. Therefore, most people's career paths wind up looking more like a forest path or the course of a river than a straight flight path from point A to point B. Career paths tend to wander around, to *meander*. Just as a river must take an indirect path to get around hills and other obstacles, we often have to do a little meandering to get around barriers. We also meander simply to explore various career possibilities.

This doesn't mean that you should wander aimlessly for the rest of your life! It does mean that, although career building gives you an overall sense of direction, it's reasonable to expect that you'll have to take some detours along the way. In fact, you may choose to do some multi-tracking by pursuing two or more career directions at the same time. For example, at some point in your career, you may hold more than one job at the same time. Or, if you have very young children, you may choose to be a stay-at-home parent and work part-time when your spouse or a friend is available to take care of the children.

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Career building involves *manoeuvring* as well as meandering.[1] To manoeuvre is to be focused and strategic, to decide what you want and how you are going to get there. Believe it or not, you can manoeuvre and meander at the same time. In fact, you have probably already done so. For example, if you've ever sent in an application form for an education program or job before you were really sure you wanted your application to be accepted, you have taken action on a plan while you were still exploring other possibilities. In other words, you were manoeuvring and meandering at the same time.

If you are getting the idea that you are never really finished career building, you're right. Career building is a *lifelong* process of looking ahead and making decisions about what to do next. Each decision builds on previous decisions; each choice affects the choices you will have in the future.

Every day, you make decisions about work, learning, money, volunteering and many other issues. Deciding where and how to live, who you want to spend time with and what to do today are just a few of the many decisions you make. These everyday decisions are career decisions since they have an impact on the career options open to you. That's why this book is called *Multiple Choices*.

Each decision is like those tricky multiple choice questions where there are no wrong answers, but some answers are more right than others. Try answering this question, for example: what is your career?

a) Your career is the sum total of all of the work you do in your life.

b) Your career consists of learning experiences, whether they are in a classroom, in front of a computer, on a nature hike with a guide or at work when someone shows you how to perform a task.

c) Your career is made up of all of the roles you play in life (e.g. student, friend, parent, child, team member, coach, spouse, partner).

d) Your career is all of the above.

All of these answers are right, but (d) is the most complete.

Similarly, when you are making a career decision, there are no wrong choices, but some options will be more right *for you* than other options. Thinking ahead, taking the time to figure out what you really want to do and to investigate your options, gives you some control over what happens in your life. It helps you to recognize which opportunities will bring you closer to achieving your goals and which ones would probably take you off on a side track in the wrong direction.

Serendipity

Of course, chance occurrences will play a role in shaping your career. For example, you may meet someone who refers you to a friend who ends up hiring you. Or, you may come across information that interests you so much that you join a club and make new friends. Planning and preparation put you in a position to take full advantage of these lucky occurrences.

[1] The terms manoeuvre and meander were first used in a career planning context by L. Bezanson, Executive Director of the Canadian Career Development Foundation.

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SOME COMMON WORDS WITH UNCOMMON DEFINITIONS

Many people think only professionals—engineers, accountants, teachers, etc.—have careers. Everyone has a career. Even if you've never had a paid job, you still have a career. Your ***career*** is the sum of your life and work. It includes *all* your activities and experiences. Your schooling, your volunteer work and even your relationships with your family are all big parts of your career. In other words, your career is your life story.

During your career, you will have a variety of ***jobs***, ***occupations*** and ***roles***. People used to think of a job as full-time, permanent, paid work done for an employer at a work site. Jobs were generally stable and predictable. You could plan years ahead to find a particular kind of job and you knew what you needed to do to prepare yourself for it.

In our changing world, more and more work is being done by people who do not have traditional kinds of jobs. But the work is still there, so we need to redefine what we mean by the word job. A ***job*** is a set of duties or tasks. A job can be paid or unpaid. It can be completed at a work site, at home or somewhere else. It can be a contract job, a consulting job or a volunteer job. Even someone who is self-employed has a job.

An ***occupation*** is a group of jobs with similar responsibilities that require a common set of skills. For example, computer programmer is an occupation. Programmers may have permanent or temporary jobs working for specific employers, work on a freelance or contract basis, be self-employed, work full-time or part-time, be paid for their work or volunteer their services. They may change jobs or hold several jobs at one time but, until they change the type of duties or tasks they perform, they are still computer programmers.

A ***role*** is a part you play. We all play a number of roles in our lives (worker, student, spouse, child, parent) and our roles often change over time. For example, Kris works four days a week as a receptionist in a clinic and takes evening courses in geriatric social work. She also sews gymnastic wear for a neighbour who sells it at summer markets. Kris has at least three roles right now: receptionist, student and seamstress. She is also a neighbour and probably has a number of other relationship roles as well.

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THE FOUR STAGES OF CAREER BUILDING

If you're the kind of person who likes to make quick decisions and take action NOW, try to slow yourself down as you work through this book. There are no shortcuts to successful career building. There's no test you can take that will tell you exactly what you should do.

People make the best career decisions when they:

- have a thorough understanding of who they are and what they want in their work and life
- take the time to gather accurate, up-to-date information about work options
- combine information about themselves and their work options in creative ways.

Until quite recently, most books like this one presented career planning as a step-by-step procedure:

1. Get to know yourself by taking stock of your dreams and other assets.
2. Explore all sorts of work possibilities.
3. Choose a career direction and set goals.
4. Put your decisions into effect by taking action.

These steps were generally depicted as an ongoing cycle with the last step (taking action) leading back to the first step (getting to know yourself).

diagram: career planning

On paper, it looks pretty simple and straightforward. In real life, it's not. Trying to figure out what you want to do (in school, at work, with your life in general) is an ongoing *process*, not a step you ever really finish. That's because you keep growing and changing and learning new things about yourself.

The world of work is also constantly changing so exploring work options is also an ongoing process. In fact, people are often working on getting a clearer picture of what they want, seeing what the work possibilities are and deciding how they are going to get closer to the life they want, all at the same time.

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This more realistic representation of the processes involved in building a better life is called career building. It is an ongoing process of reassessment. You are constantly reassessing:

- who you are and what you want
- what work options might be best for you *at this point in your career*
- the goals you are aiming to achieve
- what you should be doing *right now* to bring you closer to your goals.

diagram: career building

For simplicity and ease of understanding, each of the following chapters deals with a different aspect of career building. It's important to realize, however, that what you learn in Chapter 4 may cause you to reassess what you did in Chapters 2 and 3. Indeed, you may come back to this book several times over the next few years to rethink what you did the first time through.

You can use this book in whatever way seems reasonable to you. Work through the chapters in order or work on whatever chapters seem most relevant to you at the moment. Within each chapter, you may choose to do all of the suggested exercises or, if some don't make sense to you, you can look for other exercises that are more meaningful (for some references, see the Related Resources section at the end of each chapter).

However you choose to tackle your career planning, it is important to record what you learn as you go along. You will be picking apart your experiences, accomplishments and dreams to identify all the little pieces that make you unique. You'll also be gathering information about lots of different work possibilities. Each insight, each new thing you learn about yourself or the world of work, is like a piece of a picture puzzle. When you put them all together, you'll get a picture of a direction you might like to take at this point in your career. What is really exciting is that, whenever you need to change directions, your puzzle pieces can be rearranged to form pictures of different possible career paths! So keep your puzzle pieces (bits of information) together in one spot.

You can use what you learn from doing the suggested exercises to help you make future career decisions as well as current ones. That's what really makes investing your time and effort worth while. You never have to start over again at the beginning. You just keep adding new insights and ideas to your set of puzzle

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pieces. Since your pieces aren't locked into one position as real puzzle pieces are, you can add new information, rearrange old information and come up with a new picture at any time in the future.

FOCUS ON THE JOURNEY

Since your career lasts your whole life long, you never really finish career building. It's the journey that's important, not the destination. Every day, you make decisions that move you along your career path. It's your trip, so make it one you enjoy!

RELATED RESOURCES

The following resources, also produced by Alberta Employment and Immigration, are available at Alberta Employment and Immigration service centres located throughout Alberta. You can view, order or download a copy at **alis.alberta.ca/publications**. Or, contact the Learning Resources Centre by telephone at 780-427-5775 or by fax 780-422-9750.

Career Planner: Choosing an occupation
This easy-to-read workbook is full of exercises and tips to work through a five-step career planning model.

Change and Transitions
This book explores change and the emotional transitions and stresses that go with it. It's full of exercises and tips to help readers overcome fears, take control, get support, create a better life balance, take informed risks, reduce stress and be prepared for the next transition.

Finding Out: How to get the information you need to make the choices you want
This booklet describes, in depth, where and how to gather information about career options.

A Guide for Midlife Career Moves
Looking for work in midlife? This guide will help you identify and take advantage of positive characteristics associated with older workers.

Tip Sheets
For quick easy-to-read tips about career planning, education and job search, visit **alis.alberta.ca/tips** and search by keyword or audience.

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CHAPTER 2

Taking stock of your assets

One of the keys to finding work that satisfies your emotional needs as well as your need for survival is to follow your heart. How you *feel* about different work options is just as important as how good they look on paper.

Your feelings about career alternatives are based on:

- your knowledge of the options open to you
- your personal career assets.

This chapter is about your personal career assets. Chapter 3 talks about how to expand your knowledge of the options open to you and how to make sure that your feelings are based on accurate, up-to-date information.

Your personal career assets are your:

- dreams
- values
- interests
- beliefs
- transferable skills
- knowledge base
- personal characteristics
- material assets
- relationships.

Get ready to do some detective work—your assignment is to figure out what kind of life you want to build.

Only you know the full extent of your career assets. You can increase your awareness of them by doing the exercises in this chapter, talking to people you respect, reading magazine and newspaper articles about how to get the most out of life and so on. But reserve the right to make your own choices—don't expect other people to make your decisions for you. You know better than anyone else what is best for you.

You already know a great deal about your personal career assets, even if you have never considered them assets. The exercises in this chapter are designed to draw out that information. They ask you to make multiple choices about your values, interests, abilities and other characteristics (e.g. Are you more this way or that way? Do you like this or that? Are you willing to try this or that?). Make it a game—remember, *there are no wrong answers*.

Different exercises work for different people. If you find that an exercise doesn't work for you, skip it and look for a different method of identifying those assets. The Related Resources section at the end of this chapter describes other resources available from the same provincial government department that produces this one, Alberta Employment and Immigration. Most libraries and career-related websites will have a variety of other self-assessment materials as well.

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The more thought you put into the exercises in this chapter, the more interesting and useful your results will be.

However you go about identifying them, keep a record of your assets by listing them in a notebook, looseleaf binder or on a computer. It's important to record, organize and store the information you gather in such a way that it will be readily available whenever you have to make a decision affecting your career. The easiest way is to create a portfolio for your career planning information. It can be a handy box, an old briefcase, a file folder and/or a computer folder—whatever you prefer to use.

As you complete each exercise, create a summary of the most important or interesting things you learned and add that summary to your portfolio. Whenever you read, see or hear something that inspires you, add something that will remind you of it to your portfolio. You can also add career-related documents such as transcripts, resumés, certificates, etc. so they are easy to find when you need them.

WHAT HAVE YOU DREAMED OF DOING?

Throughout your lifetime, you have probably daydreamed about a lot of different possibilities for your future. Taking a serious look at your dreams, both past and present, can be a valuable way to get in touch with what is really important to you.

> For example, if you have dreamed about being a famous singing star, a heroic firefighter or the best teacher ever born, ask yourself why. What is so attractive about that fantasy? Is it being famous or being widely acclaimed for the superiority of your skills and abilities? Or do you have other motivations? Do you just *love* to sing, fight fires or teach? Do you want to help others (by lifting their spirits through music, by physically rescuing them or by passing on your skills and knowledge)? What are your reasons for choosing your dream ambitions above all others?

Contrary to what you may be thinking, examining your dreams has a very practical, down to earth purpose. If you want to find work that you would look forward to doing each day, not just look forward to being finished, you have to figure out what motivates you. People feel passionate about different things. The challenge in career building is to learn as much as you can about what really "gets you going." The more detailed and specific your knowledge about what makes some types of work more interesting, challenging and meaningful to you than others, the better.

Your dreams contain a lot of clues about what interests you, what motivates and excites you and what makes work meaningful for you. So find a quiet spot, relax and picture a future that would be ideal for you. Your vision of an ideal future will be your guiding light as you build your career, so it's important to put your best effort into the following exercises.

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In Grade 7, I planned on becoming a commercial airline pilot. By the time I was 23, I had all my qualifications and in 1973, I became the first woman pilot in the industry.

—Rosella Bjornson

1. If you haven't done much daydreaming about ideal futures lately, try taking a close look at your childhood dreams.
   - What roles did you play when you were play-acting with other children? Were you the sheriff? the teacher? the doctor?
   - What did you pretend to do? (build structures; mind the store; fly a plane)
   - What did you like to read?
   - If you spent a lot of time playing on the computer or watching television, what types of programs did you enjoy most? Did you wish you could be like a particular character? If so, what attracted you to that character?

   As you recall past dreams, ask yourself, "What does this tell me about what interests and motivates me?" Put your answers in your portfolio.

2. Imagine a work life that would be absolutely ideal for you. Assume that anything is possible. Forget about all the things that limit your options and pretend that you can do anything, anywhere, right now.

   When you have a mental picture of an ideal future for you, describe your dream by answering the following questions. Make your description as specific and detailed as you can, and record it.
   - *What* are you doing? Are you working with people, operating machines, selling something, designing software, running your own restaurant? Describe your duties and responsibilities.
   - *Where* are you working? Are you outdoors, in an office building, on a farm, in a boutique, at home? Describe your work environment.
   - *Who* or what type of people are working with you and around you? Are they creative, serious, talkative, businesslike? Are you working alone or with a small team? Or are you one of many? Describe your relationships.
   - *What* kind of life are you living? What does your home look like? Where is it? What do you do for fun? Who do you spend time with? Describe your lifestyle.

3. If you would rather picture an ideal future than describe it in words, do so! Cut pictures from old magazines and create a collage that depicts your ideal. Or, draw a series of sketches depicting your ideal future.

Your imagination is your preview of life's coming attractions.

—Albert Einstein

WHAT ARE YOUR VALUES?

Your values are the ideas, principles, standards and causes that are important to you. They are your reason for behaving one way and not another. When your values are at odds with your work, you feel uncomfortable and unhappy. For example, if you value independence and prefer working on your own, you probably wouldn't be very happy in a job where you are constantly watched and you have little or no freedom to make your own decisions. Therefore, it's important to identify your values and consider them when you are making career decisions.

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Following is a list of 36 values that may or may not be important to you. Decide how important each value is to you, and put a check mark in the appropriate column (Not Important, Important, Extremely Important).

Values	Not Important	Important	Extremely Important
1. **Security** – being assured of a job and a reasonable rate of pay	❍	❍	❍
2. **Variety** – having frequent changes in various aspects of your work	❍	❍	❍
3. **Independence** – working with little or no supervision	❍	❍	❍
4. **Competition** – pitting your abilities against others to win recognition or other rewards	❍	❍	❍
5. **Time/freedom** – being able to schedule your own work time	❍	❍	❍
6. **Status** – working in a position which leads others to admire or respect you	❍	❍	❍
7. **Money** – earning a large amount of it	❍	❍	❍
8. **Creativity** – thinking up new ideas, programs or ways of doing things	❍	❍	❍
9. **Decision making** – being in a position to decide how things should be done	❍	❍	❍
10. **Recognition** – receiving visible or public recognition or appreciation for your work	❍	❍	❍
11. **People contact** – having daily contact with co-workers, customers, clients or the public	❍	❍	❍
12. **Helping society** – doing something that is worthwhile or benefits society as a whole	❍	❍	❍
13. **Being an expert** – being known as someone who has special knowledge or skills in a particular field	❍	❍	❍
14. **Helping others** – helping people, individually or in groups	❍	❍	❍
15. **Belonging** – feeling that you have a place in society or are part of a group	❍	❍	❍
16. **Working alone** – doing things on your own, without much involvement of other people	❍	❍	❍
17. **Power** – being able to direct and influence the activities of others	❍	❍	❍
18. **Precision** – doing work that requires exactness or a high degree of accuracy	❍	❍	❍
19. **Excitement** – doing work that has plenty of stimulation or thrills	❍	❍	❍
20. **Stability** – having steady and predictable work	❍	❍	❍
21. **Relationships** – building work and social relationships with people	❍	❍	❍
22. **Family** – being involved in a meaningful way with members of your family	❍	❍	❍
23. **Fun** – finding pleasure in the things you do	❍	❍	❍
24. **Beauty** – finding meaning or beauty in art, nature or design	❍	❍	❍
25. **Technology** – working with new equipment or processes that apply the latest science	❍	❍	❍
26. **Structure** – organizing your activities or having reliable social or work arrangements	❍	❍	❍

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Values	Not Important	Important	Extremely Important
27. **Affiliation** – being a member of a formal group, organization or club	❍	❍	❍
28. **Health** – keeping a healthy body and mind	❍	❍	❍
29. **Empowerment** – enabling others or giving them permission to carry out activities	❍	❍	❍
30. **Individuality** – performing tasks in your unique way, without prescribed rules	❍	❍	❍
31. **Knowledge** – learning and understanding things, acquiring new skills	❍	❍	❍
32. **Moral fulfillment** – doing work that you believe in strongly	❍	❍	❍
33. **Serenity** – not having a lot of pressure or stress	❍	❍	❍
34. **Problem solving** – troubleshooting and solving problems	❍	❍	❍
35. **Location** – working and living where you want	❍	❍	❍
36. **Physical challenge** – working in a position that requires strength, speed or agility	❍	❍	❍

Consider the values you have checked off as Extremely Important. If you could have just one of those values in your work, which would it be? Put the number 1 beside that value. Then put a 2 beside your second most important value, and so on until you have chosen at least six values that are the most important to you.

Add a list of your most important values to your portfolio. These values will probably remain important to you throughout your working life. However, their priority may change as your circumstances change. For example, when you start a family or when your children leave home, the priority you give the family value may change.

WHAT INTERESTS YOU?

Your interests are reflected in the things you enjoy doing. Wouldn't it be wonderful if you could get paid for activities you enjoy?

It's not an impossible dream. Many people have added variety, meaning and a sense of satisfaction to their lives by pursuing their interests. They've made good friends and learned new skills through their hobbies and opened doors to exciting work possibilities.

Motivated by a desire to live the way they want, many people have turned their hobbies into jobs or small businesses. Most small business guides recommend starting small, while you still have a full-time job, and gradually expanding your business until it is large enough to support your lifestyle. However, if you have lost your job and are willing to consider a variety of work alternatives, take some time to consider the possibility of building your career around activities that really interest you. You may be like the government accountant who decided to build and sell dog houses instead; or the teacher who, after 20 years in the classroom, decided to start a home-based seedling business; or the paramedic who works part-time as an emergency dispatcher and part-time as a musician.

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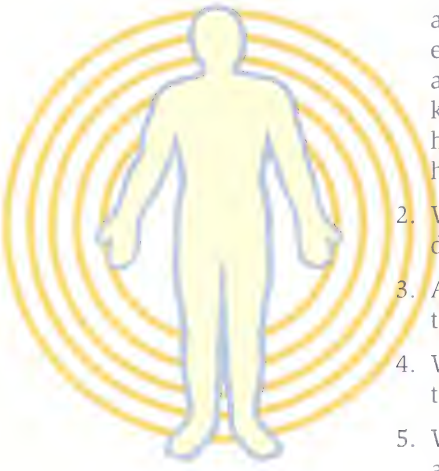
To become more aware of your interests, answer the following questions.

1. Pretend this is a picture of you.



What interests and activities do you associate with your hands? feet? heart? ears? mouth? eyes? For example, you may associate playing soccer with your feet and knees. An activity you associate with your heart might be doing volunteer work at a hospital or food bank.[2]

2. What other interests would you like to develop?
3. Are there any interests you had in the past that you would like to rediscover?
4. What interests have always been important to you?
5. Which of your interests could you turn into a business or use to bring in some extra cash?

Put your list of interests into your portfolio and indicate those having some career potential. Whenever you think of other interests or associated career possibilities, add them to your list.

WHAT BELIEFS ARE INFLUENCING YOUR BEHAVIOUR?

Have you ever heard someone say, "Bad things always happen to me" or "I'm always lucky"? It's probably true—what you believe often becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. People who say that bad things always happen to them believe that life is beyond their control, that events just "happen." They don't accept responsibility for their actions or their relationships with others and tend to expect the worst. Consequently, bad things, like losing a job or marriage partner, *are* more likely to happen to them!

A belief states what you *think* is true. You may or may not have *proof* to support beliefs you have acquired through experience or from other people (e.g. your parents, teachers, friends). Therefore, it's important to examine your beliefs from time to time to make sure they are accurate and helpful, not restricting your actions unnecessarily.

For example, you may be over forty years old and unexpectedly have to find new employment. You've heard many companies prefer to hire young people and it is almost impossible to find a good job when you are an older worker. If you have this belief, you will not be motivated to look for work, thus reducing your chances of finding a job. However, labour force reports indicate employers value maturity in workers. Your skills and experience will most likely help you succeed in finding new employment.

[2] Adapted from Working from the Heart by J. McMakin and S. Dyer (New York: Harper, 1989).

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People who have lost their jobs after many years of service in an organization often feel betrayed because they *believed* that their jobs were secure. They assumed that if they worked hard, their employers would look after them. If that was ever really true, it certainly isn't a valid assumption now. It's more constructive to believe that your security lies in the skills, knowledge and attitudes you have to offer.

Positive thinkers focus on the silver lining, not the cloud. They make statements like the following:

- I can handle customer complaints easily.
- I'll have no problem acquiring the skills I need to be competitive.
- Changes in the economy have created a lot of new kinds of work.

Negative thinkers see the world differently. They make statements like these:

- I always have trouble using technical equipment.
- I'll have a hard time finding work because I... (am too young/old, don't have a degree, don't know the right people, etc.).
- There are no jobs anymore that are related to my skills and qualifications.

Do you tend to be a positive thinker or a negative thinker? Most people are a mixture of both—some days we feel more positive and hopeful than others—but, overall, we have a general tendency to be more one way than the other.

The following exercise will help you to clarify your beliefs, determine if they are helping or hindering you and transform the ones that are getting in your way.

1. Carefully consider each of the following statements. If you agree with a statement, put a check mark beside it.

   ❍ I have a wonderful support system in my life (friends, family and/or other helpful supportive people).

   ❍ Everything is changeable, including my habits.

   ❍ I like myself and believe I deserve a good life.

   ❍ To be liked, I must always agree with other people.

   ❍ I am responsible for my own life.

   ❍ People often try to con me.

   ❍ I fail no matter how hard I try.

   ❍ I am a creative person.

   ❍ Life is hard.

   ❍ My world is a safe and friendly one.

   ❍ I'm too old to go back to school.

   ❍ No one will hire me now that I am over 40.

   ❍ I don't like my job but it pays a good salary. I wouldn't be able to do as well anywhere else.

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2. What else have you thought or said out loud about life/work lately? For example, if you are looking for work, what have you thought about the whole search process and how long it will take? Add these thoughts to your list and put a check mark beside them.
3. Go back to the statements that have no check marks beside them and turn them into statements about what you believe. For example, if you didn't check off the statement, "Everything is changeable, including my habits," do you believe there are habits you can't change? If so, state which habits and why. Likewise, if you didn't check off the statement, "People often try to con me," describe how you think people generally behave toward you. Put a check mark beside the statements you add.
4. Add a second check mark beside statements that represent negative thinking (e.g. Life is hard).
5. Record your positive beliefs (the statements that have one check mark beside them) under the title "My Helpful Beliefs." Record your negative beliefs (the ones that have two check marks beside them).
6. Review your list of negative beliefs. Ideally, your list will be short because these beliefs will hinder you in career building. They close your eyes to opportunities and make you less willing to try new ways of doing or looking at things. If you don't challenge these beliefs, they can become self-fulfilling prophecies.

People tend to pay attention to things that support their beliefs and ignore things that do not. For example, we are more likely to read or listen to news items that confirm our beliefs than to ones that argue against what we believe. That's why you may be tempted to skip the last part of this exercise. Please don't! The effort you put into challenging negative thinking can really pay off in the future.

Transform negative thinking into positive thinking by turning your belief statements upside down and "reframing" them. For example, if you believe that no one will hire you because you are over 40, reframe that thought into something like "Employers are looking for people like me who have already demonstrated that they are reliable workers." Look for evidence that supports this reframed belief (e.g. reports of employers complaining about being unable to find reliable workers).

Now, reframe each of your negative beliefs. Then, describe this exercise to people who tend to think positively and whose opinions you respect. Ask them how they would reframe each of your negative beliefs. After you have gathered several reframed statements for each negative belief, erase your list of negative beliefs. As you do so, imagine that you are letting go of the beliefs themselves.

Pick out the reframed statements that make the most sense to you. Attach them to your list of helpful beliefs and repeat them to yourself several times a day. Act as if you believe they are true and look for supporting evidence. Gradually, you'll convince yourself!

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MULTIPLE Choices

WHAT SKILLS CAN YOU TRANSFER TO DIFFERENT WORK SITUATIONS?

Name 700 things you can do well. According to the experts, that's how many skills you have if you are anything like the average person! You've acquired these skills through your work and school activities, hobbies, social activities, community/volunteer work, homemaking and leisure activities.

Unlike a job that remains behind when you leave, skills are like luggage you take with you on your life journey. Some skills are useful in a variety of different situations. You can transfer them from one situation to another, from one employer to another and from one occupational field to another. As you read through the following list of transferable skills, check off the ones you can do well.

Don't sell yourself short by being too modest! If you feel you are competent or perform a skill as well as most people, put a check mark beside it.

Numerical skills

- ❍ **Counting** – determining how many items there are in a group.
- ❍ **Calculating** – using basic arithmetic skills: adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing.
- ❍ **Measuring** – using tools or equipment to determine length, angle, volume or weight.
- ❍ **Estimating** – judging the cost or size of things. Predicting the outcome of an arithmetic problem before you calculate the answer.
- ❍ **Budgeting** – planning exactly how you will spend money. Deciding what to buy and how much to spend, or how to get work done at the lowest cost.
- ❍ **Using numerical reasoning** – understanding how to work with numbers or statistics. Knowing how to read data and interpret statistics.

Communication skills

- ❍ **Reading** – getting information from written materials. Following written instructions on what to do or how to operate a piece of equipment.
- ❍ **Writing** – using good grammar to write clear sentences and paragraphs. Being able to express yourself or explain things in writing.
- ❍ **Talking** – being able to talk to strangers in ordinary conversational settings.
- ❍ **Speaking in public** – addressing or delivering a speech to a group or audience.
- ❍ **Listening** – paying close attention to what the other person is saying and responding appropriately.
- ❍ **Questioning** – asking the right questions to get useful information from others or to help them gain insight.
- ❍ **Explaining** – speaking carefully and clearly so people can understand you quickly and easily.
- ❍ **Resolving conflicts** – being able to bring disagreements to successful conclusions.

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- ❍ **Persuading** – converting others to your viewpoint.
- ❍ **Negotiating** – bargaining with others to solve a problem or reach an agreement.
- ❍ **Teaching** – instructing others.
- ❍ **Chairing meetings** – listening, speaking, encouraging discussion and following an agenda.

Leadership skills

- ❍ **Making decisions** – choosing an action and accepting responsibility for the consequences.
- ❍ **Directing/supervising** – overseeing or managing the work of others and accepting responsibility for their performance.
- ❍ **Initiating** – taking the first step; getting things started.
- ❍ **Confronting** – telling others something they may not want to hear about their behaviour, habits, etc.
- ❍ **Interviewing** – questioning people in order to gather information.
- ❍ **Planning** – developing projects or ideas through careful preparation, and deciding when and in what order each step will take place.
- ❍ **Organizing** – co-ordinating the people and resources necessary to put a plan into action.
- ❍ **Coaching** – helping others, one-on-one or in a small group, to achieve a goal.
- ❍ **Feedback** – providing others with accurate descriptions of their work, behaviour, appearance, etc.

Sense awareness skills

- ❍ **Using sound discrimination** – hearing slight differences in sound.
- ❍ **Using colour discrimination** – seeing small differences in colours.
- ❍ **Using shape discrimination** – seeing small differences in shapes and sizes, noticing how things are alike or different.
- ❍ **Using depth perception** – correctly judging distance between objects.

Using logical thinking

- ❍ **Problem solving** – defining a problem, seeking alternatives, selecting a solution.
- ❍ **Investigating/researching** – gathering information in an organized way to determine certain facts.
- ❍ **Assessing** – correctly determining the nature of a situation or issue.
- ❍ **Analyzing** – breaking a problem down into its parts so that each part can be handled separately.
- ❍ **Synthesizing** – putting facts and ideas together in new and creative ways to identify possible solutions.
- ❍ **Testing** – determining the effectiveness of possible solutions.

Helping skills

- ❍ **Serving** – caring, doing things for others.
- ❍ **Enjoying people** – showing genuine interest in clients and customers.

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- **Treating** – doing things to relieve a person's physical or psychological problems.
- **Co-operating** – working with others to reach a common goal; working as part of a team to complete a task.
- **Facilitating** – making it easier for others to accomplish a task, for example by co-ordinating a group discussion leading to a decision.
- **Advising/counselling** – helping others cope with their personal, educational and work concerns by providing information or advice.

Organization skills

- **Managing information** – keeping records of activities, inventory, budgets, data.
- **Managing multiple responsibilities** – handling several roles or projects at one time.
- **Filing** – sorting information into an organized system.
- **Remembering** – being able to recall names, dates, facts and events.
- **Following** – taking direction and completing assigned tasks.
- **Scheduling** – keeping track of projects, timetables, itineraries, etc.
- **Co-ordinating** – getting people and/or materials moving to complete a project in an orderly manner.
- **Classifying** – using and adapting a complex organization system for the storage and efficient retrieval of information.

Technical skills

- **Using computers** – understanding and performing basic computer tasks.
- **Operating equipment** – using a variety of tools, machines and communication devices (photocopiers, fax machines, modems, etc.).
- **Maintaining equipment** – regularly checking and adjusting equipment to make sure it is working properly.
- **Constructing** – using a variety of tools, materials and equipment in a building project.
- **Measuring** – using various devices to make sure the exact size or capacity of something meets certain standards.

Self-management skills

- **Maintaining health** – eating properly and getting enough exercise, rest and relaxation.
- **Assessing quality** – correctly determining the worth of the work you are performing.
- **Adapting** – adjusting to life or work changes and being prepared for the unexpected.
- **Risk-taking** – going beyond your personal comfort zone and seeking new ways to complete tasks efficiently.
- **Managing time** – using your time in a productive way to accomplish everything you need to do.
- **Learning** – using a variety of methods to gain the skills, knowledge and attitudes you need.
- **Managing money** – knowing your income and expenses and making changes when necessary to meet your goals and avoid going into debt.

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- ❍ **Being self-directed** – deciding what needs doing and getting it done without being prompted by someone else.
- ❍ **Building relationships** – developing a variety of associations with others inside and outside of work.
- ❍ **Managing stress** – knowing the causes of stress, coping with the pressures in your life and maintaining a sense of humour.
- ❍ **Collaborating** – co-operating with others inside and outside of work to accomplish shared goals.
- ❍ **Visioning** – imagining something and determining the steps you need to take to achieve it.
- ❍ **Personal marketing** – packaging and promoting yourself in ways that will improve your work and your ability to get work.
- ❍ **Tracking trends** – keeping yourself informed, through the media and other sources, about major changes and movements that affect your life and work.

Being creative and innovative

- ❍ **Creating/inventing** – coming up with new ideas or inventions.
- ❍ **Designing/displaying** – organizing spaces, products, objects, colours or images creatively.
- ❍ **Improvising/experimenting/adapting** – making changes as needed to get the job done; finding new and creative ways to accomplish tasks.
- ❍ **Performing/entertaining** – using your talents to hold the attention of an audience, either live or on camera.
- ❍ **Drawing/painting/sculpting** – communicating feelings or thoughts through works of art in a variety of media.
- ❍ **Writing/playwriting/composing** – creating new and original materials to entertain, educate or express thoughts or feelings.

Look over the skills you have checked and make lists of:

1. The ten skills you do best.
2. The ten skills you enjoy using most (this list may include some of the skills you do best because we tend to practice and become good at the things we enjoy).
3. The ten skills you would like to develop.

Add these three lists to your portfolio. You also may want to add:

- a list of other transferable skills you checked off (not just the top ten)
- a list of other skills you have that are required for a particular type of work (e.g. being able to sew or repair motorcycle engines).

Remember, you probably have hundreds of skills, not just the common ones listed here.

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MULTIPLE Choices

WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

You know a great deal more than what you learned in school. In fact, you probably know so much that answering the question "What do you know?" off the top of your head could become an overwhelming task. It's a lot easier if you break it down into smaller, more manageable tasks.

1. Brainstorm lists of things you have learned in the last five years through the following types of activities:
   - formal education/training programs or courses (e.g. full-time post-secondary programs, continuing education courses)
   - formal and informal on-the-job training (e.g. learning how to use new equipment or a new computer program)
   - short presentations (e.g. at conferences, in hardware stores, at cultural heritage sites)
   - recreational activities (e.g. pursuing hobbies, reading, watching educational television, talking to knowledgeable people).

   Keep adding to your lists as ideas occur to you over the next several days.
2. Some types of knowledge become outdated very quickly; some don't. For example, computer users no longer have to know how to format a floppy disk. Strike off your lists any knowledge that is already outdated. Then, add knowledge that you acquired more than five years ago that is still useful.
3. Review your lists and pick out the knowledge assets you would most like to use in your career building.
4. For each of your most important knowledge assets, decide whether what you know is primarily:
   - *theoretical* knowledge relating to the principles that govern the way things work
   - *technical/technological* knowledge relating to the methods used to produce products or results
   - *applied* knowledge relating to practical skills that can be used to achieve an end product or result.

The things you have learned outside the classroom, through work and leisure activities, may be among your most important personal career assets.

For example, if you know a considerable amount about electricity and conductivity, your knowledge may be primarily theoretical (the kind of knowledge a physicist would have), technical/technological (the kind of knowledge an electrical engineering technologist would have) or applied (the kind of knowledge an electrician would have).

The type of knowledge you have is important in determining where that knowledge is marketable. Add a description of your most important knowledge to your portfolio.

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WHAT KIND OF PERSON ARE YOU?

Have you ever been to a memorial service where people get up and say nice things about the dearly departed? "He had a great sense of humour." "She was a true and loyal friend." At least two questions probably went through your mind:

1. Did the person realize how much they were appreciated?
2. What would people say about your personality?

The first question is unanswerable. The second question you can partly answer yourself, if you try to see yourself through others' eyes. You can get a more complete and accurate answer by asking your friends. But first, read the following.

Our personalities develop and change over time. Some characteristics make us more attractive to employers as potential workers; some make us less attractive. Positive characteristics such as loyalty, tactfulness and open-mindedness help us to maintain good relationships and work effectively with other people. Negative characteristics such as impatience hinder our ability to work well in team situations. Since good working relationships are related to worker satisfaction and productivity, employers naturally prefer to hire people who have positive characteristics.

In today's rapidly changing work world, being a self-starter is one of the most valuable personal characteristics you can have. Employers are looking for employees who are self-motivated and don't expect others to manage their time or activities. They need well-rounded workers who can adapt to shifting work requirements, new technologies and unpredictable business environments.

To begin assessing your personal characteristics, try this exercise.

1. Read through the following list of positive characteristics. For each characteristic, put a check mark in column A if you are satisfied that you regularly demonstrate that characteristic. If you should work on improving that characteristic, put a check mark in column B.

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A I'm happy with my ability to be:	B I would like to improve my ability to be:	Personal characteristic
❍	❍	A positive thinker
❍	❍	Co-operative
❍	❍	Courteous
❍	❍	Dependable
❍	❍	Persistent
❍	❍	Respectful of others
❍	❍	A learner
❍	❍	Courageous
❍	❍	A risk-taker
❍	❍	A good self-manager
❍	❍	Flexible/adaptable
❍	❍	Friendly/cheerful
❍	❍	Honest
❍	❍	Loyal
❍	❍	Sensitive
❍	❍	Curious
❍	❍	Responsible for my life
❍	❍	Open-minded
❍	❍	Punctual
❍	❍	Tolerant
❍	❍	Sincere
❍	❍	Tactful
❍	❍	Self-directed

2. Are there any characteristics that do not have a check mark in either column A or column B? If so, why? Are you prepared to lose work opportunities because you are unwilling to display that characteristic? For example, if you are unwilling to make an effort to be punctual, habitual lateness could cost you a lot in terms of poor references and lost work.
3. Add a list of the personal characteristics you checked in column A to your portfolio. Add to this list any other positive characteristics that are important to you.
4. Work on improving the characteristics you checked in column B. You can get ideas about how to do that from friends who have the characteristic you want to improve. You may also get some ideas by reading Chapter 4.

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WHAT ARE YOUR MATERIAL ASSETS?

The material goods you own can be career assets if they are work-related. For example, computers, cars, specialized equipment and money in the bank are career assets because they allow you to take advantage of work opportunities that would not be open to you otherwise.

Following is a list of some common work-related material assets:

- Telephone/fax
- Cell phone/personal digital assistant
- Appropriate clothes for workplaces
- Protective clothing
- Computer hardware and software
- Transportation: bike, motorcycle, car, truck
- Money in the bank/investments
- Special tools (name them)
- Art supplies
- Photographic equipment
- Portfolio of creative work

Make a list of your material assets. If you have special tools, name them, and include any other material assets you may have that are not on the above list. Add your Material Assets list to your portfolio—you may want to refer to it when you are considering different work alternatives (see Chapter 3) or whenever you need to be reminded of your many blessings.

WHAT RELATIONSHIP ASSETS DO YOU HAVE?

Success in our complex world depends partly on having a support system of people who can provide information and help when you need it. You probably meet many potential allies through your leisure activities as well as work-related activities. They may be family members, friends, neighbours, school or work associates, sport buddies, even friends of friends. They become part of your support system when you support them by providing information and help when they need it, and they do the same for you.

Building and maintaining a support system of allies takes time and a sincere effort to pay attention to the needs of others as well as your own. Although the phrase support system may be relatively new, the concepts behind building one are not. They are reflected in some very old and familiar sayings.

- What goes around, comes around.
- Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.
- You receive the greatest gifts when first you practice giving away.
- You reap what you sow.

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People who live according to these gems of wisdom practise abundance. They believe that the supply of good information, good people and good prospects is unlimited. They share information and help others willingly. They enjoy helping others to succeed.

They freely exchange with their allies:

- *advice* about things they have accomplished and their allies are working toward
- *support* in the form of a willingness to listen and a genuine concern for the other person's welfare
- *information* (so long as sharing the information does not violate a trust)
- *referrals and introductions* to others who are willing to share information
- *instruction* to help each other gain desired knowledge and skills
- *trust*
- *an open attitude* toward building mutually beneficial relationships.

Are you such a person? In your relationships with people, do you try to give at least as much as you receive? If so, you probably have quite a few allies.

Record your allies' names and contact information (telephone numbers, e-mail addresses, etc.) so you have this information when you need their assistance. Include all the people you know who would be willing to share information and ideas with you, even if you do not consider them close friends. If that adds up to a lot of people, you'll need to organize the information by using an address book, index cards, a box for business cards, computer files or whatever record-keeping system works for you. Make it a habit to add names and contact information whenever you meet new people who might be interested in sharing information and support.

If you would like to expand and strengthen your support system, you can do so quite naturally and gradually by making a conscious effort to be as helpful to others as you can. Or, if you need information and support right away, you can deliberately cultivate a specific group of allies by:

- identifying potential allies
- contacting them
- asking for the help you need.

To identify potential allies, think about all the people you see as you go about your daily living. Who do you know and trust? Who shares your values and interests? These are the people with whom you have a better chance of forming strong mutually beneficial relationships. When each of you has skills and knowledge of the other's needs, you've got the makings of a strong alliance.

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Let your allies and potential allies know your career plans and what kinds of information or help you need. For example, if you are looking for work, describe your background and qualifications and the type of work you want. Ask people to let you know when they hear about that kind of work becoming available. You'll be surprised at how open and helpful people are when you make your request in a sincere and straightforward manner!

Start by contacting your strongest allies and discussing your goals and concerns over coffee. Ask them to introduce you to others who may be able to help you. When you contact the people you've been referred to, explain who you are, who referred you, why you are calling, what you need and what you are willing to offer in return.

YOUR PORTFOLIO

If you have completed all of the activities in this chapter, your portfolio will contain descriptions of your personal career assets:

- what your childhood dreams tell you about what motivates and excites you, and a description or picture of your ideal work life
- your six most important values
- your interests and associated career possibilities
- your positive, helpful beliefs
- your ten best transferable skills, ten skills you enjoy using most and ten skills you would like to develop
- your most important knowledge assets
- the personal characteristics you have and would like to develop
- your career-related material assets
- the names, addresses, telephone numbers, etc. of your allies.

If you've got all this information together, congratulations! You've come a long way toward gathering the puzzle pieces you need to picture a future that will be satisfying and rewarding for you.

Review your portfolio often and keep it up to date by adding ideas as you think of them and descriptions of new assets as you acquire them.

The next chapter will help you to relate what you have learned about your career assets to the world of work. You have lots of options to consider and multiple choices to make!

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RELATED RESOURCES

The following resources, also produced by Alberta Employment and Immigration, are available at Alberta Employment and Immigration service centres located throughout Alberta. You can view, order or download a copy at **alis.alberta.ca/publications**. Or, contact the Learning Resources Centre by telephone at 780-427-5775 or by fax 780-422-9750.

Assessing You: The first step in career planning (formerly Skills Plus Handbook)

This self-directed workbook has structured activities designed to help readers identify their skills and other assets. It is full of ideas and information about how to be more adaptable in today's work world.

Positive Works II

It's amazing what you can accomplish by changing negative attitudes and beliefs into positives! This book is full of exercises and tips to help you put those positives to work in all areas of your life.

Tip Sheets

For quick easy-to-read tips about career planning, education and job search, visit **alis.alberta.ca/tips** and search by keyword or audience.

Workability: What you need to get & keep a job

This handbook includes activities to self-assess current skills and develop the skills and attitudes needed for success in the workplace.

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CHAPTER 3

Exploring work possibilities

There are so many opportunities in today's rapidly changing work world that it's sometimes a little mind boggling. A natural reaction is to make your life easier by rejecting unfamiliar possibilities and latching on to the first attractive option you find. By doing so, however, you may be settling for much less than you deserve. We all deserve to thrive in our careers, not just survive.

Keeping an open mind is critical to career-building success. Don't box yourself in by rejecting ideas too quickly. If you are already feeling trapped, it's all the more important to back up and take a serious look at work possibilities that may be unfamiliar, even a little frightening, to you.

Consider *two* aspects of each work possibility you find:

- the nature of the work itself (the duties and responsibilities, qualifications required, etc.)
- alternate ways of doing the work (full-time/part-time employment, contract work, multi-tracking, etc.).

There are a number of work possibilities that could move you closer to achieving your dreams. This chapter is about finding and learning more about those possibilities.

The purpose of this chapter is:

- to expand your knowledge of the work possibilities open to you in today's employment marketplace
- to help you get started thinking about where people who have career assets like yours are needed
- to show you how to gather accurate, up-to-date information about work possibilities.

ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF WORKING

How you work is often just as important in determining how happy you are with your work as what you do. Instead of working full-time for one employer, you might be happier:

- working part-time
- multi-tracking
- job/work sharing
- being your own boss
- contracting or providing consulting services
- talent pooling (see below).

These work alternatives are becoming increasingly viable, no matter what type of work you do. What's more, they are not mutually exclusive. You can be employed full time and be multi-tracking at the same time or you could be working part time because you are job sharing.

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Working part time

Part-time employees usually work less than 30 hours a week for a particular employer. Their jobs are as secure as any kind of work these days and their incomes are predictable (although lower than those of full-time employees). Part-time employees may have fewer employment benefits than full-time employees and part-time positions are harder to find in some occupations. The big advantage to working part time is having free time to pursue other interests.

Multi-tracking

Multi-tracking refers to having more than one job at the same time. The jobs may be part time, or one could be full time and the other(s) part time. Multi-tracking can leave people with little leisure time and requires very good time management skills. However, it allows people to pursue a variety of interests at the same time, gives them a broader set of skills, gives them the security of knowing that they don't have all their eggs in one basket and provides added income.

Job/work sharing

Job/work sharing involves two or more people sharing the responsibilities of one job description (job sharing) or sharing a function such as after-sales service (work sharing). Job/work sharing has all the advantages and disadvantages of working part time.

Self-employment

People who are self-employed may develop, market and deliver services or products on their own or they may employ others. Those who employ others are generally called entrepreneurs. Those who work on their own often operate home-based businesses. The disadvantages of self-employment and entrepreneurship are well known: income is unpredictable, the future is uncertain, long work hours may be required to build and maintain the business and there may be a financial risk. The advantages are that there is no ceiling on income potential, work hours are flexible and you can build your business around the kinds of work you enjoy most.

Contracting/consulting

Contracting and consulting are two types of self-employment. Contractors usually work for employers for a previously agreed-upon period of time and/or sign contracts in which they agree to provide specified services within a certain time frame. Consultants work on a number of projects at the same time. The challenge is to avoid accepting too much work while at the same time avoiding long gaps between contracts. As with any type of self-employment, income levels fluctuate and there are no benefits (e.g. employment insurance, dental care plan). However, contractors and consultants may work in a wide variety of settings. They are their own bosses and they set their own work hours.

Talent pooling

Talent pooling is usually an informal arrangement among self-employed people who offer services or products that are complementary. They get together and agree to direct appropriate work opportunities to one another. For example, six people who have somewhat different skills needed in the oil and gas industry

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MULTIPLE Choices

If you don't have all the assets you need to pursue an attractive work alternative, your next career goal may be to acquire those assets.

could agree to tell one another about appropriate work opportunities whenever they encounter them. Talent pooling also allows them to accept work for which they are not fully qualified on their own. They can form temporary, informal partnerships with other members of the group who have the skills they lack.

Your personal career assets (see Chapter 2) will determine how suitable these work alternatives may be for you. If you value independence and have or can acquire the skills, knowledge, personal characteristics and material assets required, you might be very interested in the possibility of setting up your own business. If your most important value is family, you may be interested in working part time or job/work sharing. If you need extra cash to pursue your dreams, you may be interested in multi-tracking for awhile.

Here are some examples of how people are using various work alternatives to achieve their career goals.

Louis is multi-tracking because he needs the extra money, and because he is hoping that his new part-time job will lead to a full-time position.

> After graduating from an accounting diploma program, Louis looked for a full-time accounting job while he continued to work three nights a week for a commercial cleaning company. Eventually, he accepted a part-time accounting clerk position because it would allow him to "get his foot in the door." Since one part-time job doesn't pay well enough to cover his living expenses, let alone his student loan payments, he decided to keep his old part-time job as well. When his new part-time position expands into a full-time position (as he expects it will), he plans to quit his job with the cleaning company and take evening courses leading to an accounting designation.

Julia is a contractor because she likes the flexibility it gives her in juggling her role as mother and her work as a medical transcriptionist.

> As the end of her one-year maternity leave got closer, Julia became increasingly uncomfortable about going back to work. She wanted to stay at home with her baby, but she knew the family income would be drastically reduced if she didn't work at all. Fortunately, when she talked to her supervisor at the medical clinic, Julia found a sympathetic ear. Her supervisor explained that the partners in the clinic were planning to expand and, since they were happy with the work of the person they had hired to cover Julia's position while she was away, they might be willing to hire Julia's replacement permanently and give Julia work on a contract basis whenever they needed extra help. Julia and her husband decided that they were prepared to take the financial risk and Julia formally resigned. Several months later, Julia borrowed the equipment she needed from the clinic and began doing the clinic's overflow work at home. Now, her baby is almost two years old and Julia is doing contract work for another clinic, too. She has purchased her own equipment and plans to gradually expand her home-based business by finding more and more clients as her child gets older.

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MULTIPLE Choices

Self-employment turned out to be the best option for Frances, who had no previous work experience outside the home.

> Frances was 56 years old when her husband died and she discovered that the benefits she would receive from his life insurance and pension fund would not be enough to support her. She considered selling their modest bungalow, located on an acreage just outside a small town, but the real estate market was depressed and the money from the sale would only support her for a few years. Work opportunities in her community were scarce and commuting to the city for a low-paying job just didn't make sense.
>
> It was a chance conversation that helped Frances find a way to earn an income. She had been trying to think creatively about work alternatives when her son dropped by for coffee. Working for an oil and gas well servicing company, he was on the road four nights out of five and sometimes dropped in to see her on his way by. When he complained about how tired he was of motel rooms and restaurant cooking, Frances asked if he would like to stay there that night. Then they both began to realize the possibilities in what she had said.
>
> Now, employees of her son's company and other companies in the oil patch use Frances' place for accommodation when they are on the road. For the price of a motel room, they get a cosy room, a home-cooked meal, laundry services and friendly company. Frances has established some strict house rules and only accepts new customers by referral, but her business is thriving. She plans to start doing some travelling of her own in a few years.

IDENTIFYING WORK POSSIBILITIES

There are a great many ways to identify work possibilities, but they all boil down to two basic approaches.

1. You identify your personal career assets, then you look for and research work possibilities related to those assets.
2. You read and talk to people about a wide variety of work possibilities and learn about your personal career assets by comparing what you know about yourself to the assets required by different options.

You may prefer one approach over the other, but why not use both? Remember, meandering is as much a part of career building as manoeuvering. It's important to explore many possibilities and to continue exploring even after you have found a few options that look very promising. You may choose to manoeuver by pursuing a particular option right now because it satisfies your immediate needs, but that doesn't mean you should stop looking for and learning about other possibilities. The more exploring you do, the more likely you are to discover some real treasures.

If you have already identified some work possibilities (e.g. on your own, or in a high school course or career planning seminar), start your list of potential work options with those possibilities and add more to your list by doing all or some of the following activities.

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If you prefer to begin by surveying a wide variety of work possibilities, skip the rest of this section (you can come back later) and go directly to Investigating Work Possibilities in the next section of this chapter. It describes where to find information and how to research work possibilities.

If you have completed some of the exercises in Chapter 2 and would like to look for work possibilities related to your particular assets, you can start by:

- brainstorming a list of possibilities related to various types of assets (see Brainstorming Exercise #1 below and Brainstorming Exercise #2 later in this chapter)
- choosing industries that relate to your assets and identifying work possibilities in those industries (see the Industry Exercise on the next page).

Brainstorming Exercise #1

Ask yourself and others about different types of work associated with:

- your dreams

  If you did at least one of the exercises in the "What have you dreamed of doing?" section of Chapter 2, what types of work possibilities did you dream about? What related occupations can you think of that might be interesting possibilities?

- your interests

  Pull out your portfolio and review the interests you have identified. What work possibilities are associated with your interests?

  What school subjects did you enjoy most? What occupations are associated with those subjects? If you don't know, ask teachers in those subject areas, look for information at a counselling office or library or ask your allies to help you brainstorm some possibilities.

  Have you ever taken an interest inventory (e.g. in school, in a self-help book)? What did you learn about your interests? What kinds of occupations are associated with those interests?

- your values

  What sorts of work possibilities are associated with your most important values? For example, if status is important to you, what occupations would give you the opportunity to earn the respect and admiration you desire? If helping others is important to you, how would you like to help (e.g. by providing personal services, by developing tools people can use to help themselves, by entertaining people, by counselling people)? What occupations are associated with providing those types of help?

- your beliefs

  What occupations are associated with issues you feel strongly about? For example, if you feel strongly about environmental issues, add environment-related occupations to your list of possibilities (for a start, see the Environment industry section in the Industry Exercise on the next page).

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- your skills

  If you did the transferable skills exercise in Chapter 2, what occupations require the skills you do well, enjoy using or want to develop? Keep this question in the back of your mind as you research work possibilities (see the Investigating Work Possibilities section later in this chapter). Occupational descriptions very often include information about the skills and personal characteristics required—you can compare those descriptions to your personal career assets to determine which occupations require the assets you have or want to develop.

- your knowledge

  If you already have a substantial amount of background knowledge in a particular field, you may be able to build on that base even if you don't want to stay in your current occupation. You may be able to move into administration, sales or training positions related to your knowledge. For example, if you have a background in a health-related occupation, you might be interested in becoming a scientific equipment sales representative for a company whose clients include biotechnology research laboratories.

The work possibilities that will appeal to you most are the ones that dovetail with a *combination* of your career assets. Ideally, you want to find work possibilities that motivate and interest you and fit your current circumstances well.

Industry Exercise

This exercise is designed to stimulate and expand your thinking about work possibilities in industries that are related to your interests, values, beliefs, skills and/or knowledge.

1. From the following list of industries, select:
   - ones that relate to your personal career assets
   - ones that recent news reports indicate are expected to grow.

   If you do not have strong industry preferences, select at least one of the Business Services, Information Technology, Logistics or Public/Community Services industry categories. These categories include occupations such as Administrative Assistant, Computer Programmer and Sales Representative in which people may be employed in many industries.

Agriculture	Logistics
Business Services	Manufacturing and Processing
Education and Learning	Personal Services
Energy	Pharmaceuticals
Entertainment	Public/Community Services
Environment	Retail Services
Fine Arts and Crafts	Telecommunications
Forestry and Paper Products	Tourism and Hospitality
Health	Trades and Construction
Information Technology	Transportation

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2. On the following pages, find the write-ups for industries you have selected and ask yourself if you are interested in work related to various aspects of each industry. **Underline or circle** the occupations that interest you or that you would like to learn more about.

Agriculture – Are you interested in work related to:

- farming and ranching (e.g. grain and forage crop producer, agricultural mechanic, beekeeper, farm worker, horticulturist, livestock producer, market gardener, rancher, rodeo outfitter/trainer, wild game/exotic animals specialist)?
- other types of work involving plants or animals (e.g. animal care attendant, animal health technologist, arborist, botanist, farrier, feed mill production worker, greenhouse/nursery operator, pet groomer, seed cleaning/conditioning plant manager, turfgrass management specialist, veterinarian)?
- inspecting things (e.g. agricultural commodity inspector, assessor, biologist, investigator, research scientist, veterinarian)?
- developing policies (e.g. agricultural specialist, policy director, policy planner, researcher, statistician)?
- research (e.g. agricultural engineer, disease researcher, food science technologist, food scientist, import control officer, soil scientist, senior inspector)?
- marketing (e.g. sales representative, grain elevator manager)?

Business Services – Are you interested in work related to:

- financial services (e.g. accountant, accounting clerk, auditor, bank manager, business financial consultant, business law specialist, collection agent, credit manager, financial analyst, financial planner, insurance underwriter, lifestyle specialist, loans officer)?
- information services (e.g. business counsellor, copy editor, desktop publishing specialist, economic development officer, mail/courier services provider, research assistant, quick print specialist, writer/editor, technical writer)?
- marketing (e.g. advertising consultant, distribution, marketing specialist, patent development officer, public relations/affairs representative, research analyst, sales person)?
- management and administration (e.g. actuary, arbitrator, business management consultant, insurance adjuster, insurance agent, market research analyst, marketing manager, property manager, records management specialist, traffic manager)?
- lobbying (e.g. chamber of commerce official, lobbyist, public relations co-ordinator, research analyst, sector specialist, union representative)?
- administrative support (e.g. administrative assistant, building superintendent, receptionist, secretary, telemarketer, telephone operator, teller, utility clerk)?
- personnel/employment (e.g. career development specialist, classification specialist, employment agency manager, human resources officer, mediator, organizational development specialist, placement officer, recruitment officer, sales agent, training consultant, executive search consultant)?
- distribution and courier services (e.g. courier, information specialist, documents carrier, mail sorter, security specialist)?

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Educational Services – Are you interested in work related to:

- elementary/junior/senior high (e.g. guidance counsellor, library technician, principal, psychologist, social worker, speech pathologist, teacher, special needs teacher, teacher assistant, vocational teacher)?
- employee development (e.g. education co-ordinator, job analyst, staff training and development co-ordinator, technical trainer, training consultant)?
- post-secondary (e.g. counsellor, dean, laboratory assistant, professor/instructor, program head, registrar, research assistant, school liaison officer, technician)?
- adult basic education/job development (e.g. career counsellor, employment placement specialist, ESL teacher, labour market analyst, tutor, upgrading instructor)?
- personal development (e.g. driving instructor, environmental education specialist, fitness instructor, private trainer/facilitator, sports instructor)?

Energy – Are you interested in work related to:

- alternative energy (e.g. chemical engineer, chemical engineering technologist, civil engineer, civil engineering technologist, mechanical engineer, mechanical engineering technologist)?
- hydrocarbons (e.g. acquisition specialist, chemical engineer, chemical engineering technologist, commercial diver, driller, exploration geophysicist, field production operator, floorhand and leasehand, gas pipeline operator, gas plant operator, gas utility operator, geographer, geological and geophysical technologist, geologist, geomatics/surveying engineer, geomatics/surveying technologist, land agent, land surveyor, loggers and testers, mineral engineering technologist, mining engineer, oil pipeline operator, petroleum engineer, petroleum engineering technologist, refinery/upgrader process operator, seismic observer, surface mining equipment operator, underground mining equipment operator, well service pump equipment operator, wireline field supervisor)?
- hydro-electricity (e.g. computer programmer, electrician, electrical engineer, electrical engineering technologist, mechanical engineer, mechanical engineering technologist, power lineman, power system electrician, process control technician)?
- nuclear energy (e.g. geophysicist, nuclear engineer, plant operator, radiation specialist, scientist)?

Entertainment – Are you interested in work related to:

- art and design (e.g. art historian, computer animator, curator, graphic artist, landscape architect, painter, printmaker, sculptor)?
- dance (e.g. artistic director, choreographer, dance therapist, performer, teacher)?
- film/television (e.g. actor, animator, announcer, broadcast maintenance technologist, camera operator, casting director, cinematographer, critic, dialogue and acting coach, film editor, hair and makeup artist, lighting specialist, model, producer, production manager, set designer, script editor, sound specialist, technical support worker, writer)?
- music (e.g. administration/booking agent, arranger, broker, choral conductor, composer, mixer, orchestral conductor, music copyist, musician, promoter, publicist, singer, songwriter/lyricist, sound specialist, teacher, tuner)?

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- radio (e.g. community relations manager, disc jockey, editor, journalist, newscast reporter, production assistant, salesperson, writer)?
- theatre (e.g. actor, costume designer, director, fund raiser, lighting technician, makeup artist, playwright, production manager, promoter, sound engineer, stage manager, subscription salesperson, theatre designer)?
- writing (e.g. creative writer, editor, layout artist, poet, reporter, technical writer)?
- professional sports (e.g. agent, athletic therapist, coach, general manager, golf professional, kinesiologist, media liaison specialist, on-site entertainment co-ordinator, personal trainer, private trainer/facilitator, product sales and marketing specialist, product design specialist, player, scout, security specialist, site manager, trainer, turfgrass management specialist)?

Environment – Are you interested in work related to:

- impact assessment (e.g. ecologist, environmental auditor, environmental engineer, hydrologist, water resources technician/technologist, marine biologist, oceanographer, pollution control technologist, radiation protection specialist, reclamation officer)?
- policy and protection (e.g. air quality engineer, environmental lawyer, environmental journalist, fish and wildlife officer, forester, hazardous waste management technologist, mining engineer, policy analyst, public health inspector, recycling specialist, waste management specialist, wastewater treatment plant operator)?
- research and development (e.g. civil engineer (water and sewer), entomologist, forest pathologist, geographical information systems specialist, hazardous waste management technologist, landfill development engineer, landscape architect, limnologist, nuclear waste specialist)?

Fine Arts and Crafts – Are you interested in work related to:

- art and design (e.g. art director, computer assisted design specialist, conservator, exhibit designer, fashion designer, floral designer, graphic designer, illustrator, jeweller, instructor, painter/printmaker, printing and graphic arts craftsman, theatre designer)?
- wood/metal/fabric production (e.g. metal crafter, welder, wood grading specialist, woodcarver, sculptor)?
- clay production (e.g. artist, artistic director, equipment manufacturer, kiln maker, sculptor, wholesale marketing specialist)?

Forestry and Logging – Are you interested in work related to:

- primary forest processing—logging, sawmills, pulp and paper (e.g. forest technologist, forester, forestry technician, log scaler, logging/forestry equipment operator, power-saw faller/skidder, pulpmill machine operator, sawmill machine operator, topper, woodlands operator)?
- secondary manufacturing of forestry products—value-added forestry products (e.g. cabinetmaker, furniture production worker, millworker, prefabricator)?
- tertiary support supplies and services (e.g. ecological/environmental consultant, forestry researcher, forestry/silviculture consultant, operations consultant, plant designer, process equipment manufacturer/distributor)?

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Health Care and Social Services – Are you interested in work related to:

- acute, long-term and preventative care (e.g. geriatric specialist, gerontological specialist, licensed practical nurse, occupational therapist, occupational therapist assistant, physician, physiotherapist, physiotherapy assistant, psychiatric nurse, psychiatrist, radiation therapist, registered nurse, rehabilitation practitioner, respiratory therapist, speech-language pathologist, social worker, wellness consultant)?
- alternative care (e.g. acupuncturist, aromatherapist, chiropractor, chiropractic assistant, herbalist, holistic nutritionist, massage therapist, midwife, naturopathic doctor, podiatrist, reflexologist, wholesale/retail marketing and sales)?
- biotechnology (e.g. biochemist, biological technician, biotechnologist, chemist, immunologist, microbiologist, regulatory/clinical affairs specialist, research scientist, radiology technician)?
- diagnostics (e.g. cardiology technologist, diagnostic medical sonographer, electroneurophysiology technologist, laboratory technician, nuclear medicine technologist, pathologist, X-ray technologist, MRI specialist, audiologist)?
- research (e.g. geneticist, laboratory technologist, microbiologist, pharmacologist, physiologist, toxicologist)?
- health strategy (e.g. human resource specialist, policy analyst, professional development co-ordinator, project manager, research assistant, strategic planner, health lawyer, health administrator)?
- pre-hospital care (e.g. communications specialist, dispatcher, emergency medical responder, emergency medical technologist—paramedic, emergency medical technician—ambulance, informatics operator, emergency room nurse or physician)?
- public health (e.g. community health nurse, community health representative, dental assistant, dental hygienist, dentist, dietitian, health inspector, health educator, in-home nurse, orthodontist, prosthetist and orthotist, speech-language pathologist)?
- support services (e.g. health record technician, institutional aide, medical secretary, medical transcriptionist, personal care attendant, prosthetic/orthotic technician, unit/ward clerk, volunteer co-ordinator)?

Information Technology – Are you interested in work related to:

- computer systems technical development and support (e.g. computer service technician, computer hardware engineer, computer/data/information security co-ordinator, data recovery planner, electronics engineer, electronics engineering technologist, quality assurance analyst)?
- computer systems user support (e.g. help desk representative, information centre specialist, user support analyst)?
- data communications and networks (e.g. computer networking specialist, data communications analyst, network control operator, web developer, webmaster)?
- software (e.g. computer software engineer, database developer, designer, web developer, geographic information systems analyst, network developer, programmer/analyst)?
- systems analysis and programming (e.g. applications programmer, computer systems analyst, computer programmer, computer software engineer, graphics/animation programmer, programmer-analyst, systems programmer)?

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Logistics – Are you interested in work related to:

- inventory management and control (e.g. inventory counter, inventory manager, inventory verifier, inventory analyst, loss prevention manager, partsman, purchasing clerk, software support buyer)?
- production materials and movement (e.g. analyst, assembler, assembly line manager, cost analyst, data entry scheduler, forecaster, operations manager, operations research analyst, production planner, production planning engineer, station packer)?
- purchasing (e.g. buyer, cost analyst, marketing agent, purchasing manager, specialty product buyer)?
- traffic and transportation (e.g. account manager, claims clerk, customs broker, dispatcher, receiver, traffic manager, truck driver)?
- warehousing and distribution (e.g. forklift operator, issue clerk, packaging supervisor, receiver, shipper, warehouse supervisor)?

Manufacturing – Are you interested in work related to:

- chemicals/petrochemicals (e.g. chemical engineer, chemical engineering technologist, chemical technologist, chemist, electrical engineer, electrical engineering technologist, industrial engineer, instrument mechanic, instrumentation reader, manufacturing engineer)?
- food and beverage production (e.g. agricultural products processing machine operator, broker, food technologist, hopper co-ordinator, laboratory technician, machine operator, marketing and sales representative, materials handler, product developer, product feeder, quality assurance manager, stationary engineer, wrapper)?
- metals/materials (e.g. engineering design and drafting technologist, ergonomist, fitter, industrial designer, industrial hygienist, labourer, machinery operator, manufacturing engineer, materials engineering technologist, mechanical engineer, mechanical engineering technologist, metallurgical engineer, millwright, sawfiler, welder)?

Personal Services – Are you interested in work related to:

- child care (e.g. day-care worker, day-care operator, day home operator, family day home visitor, nanny, preschool/kindergarten teacher)?
- home improvement (e.g. carpenter, electrician, furnace cleaner, furniture mover, general contractor, interior decorator/designer, painter, plumber, roofer, siding specialist, tilesetter, upholsterer)?
- home-based businesses (e.g. animal care, business services, catering, crafts, direct distributing, gunsmithing, landscape gardening, mail order, photography, tailor/dressmaker, taxidermy, wedding videography, writing/publishing)?
- image and well-being (e.g. cosmetician, denturist, electrologist, embalmer, esthetician, florist, hair stylist/barber, herbalist, image consultant, manicurist and pedicurist, ophthalmic assistant, optical technician, optician, optometrist, personal fitness trainer, pharmacist, wedding co-ordinator, massage therapist, spa manager)?
- cleaning (e.g. carpet cleaner, domestic housekeeper, dry cleaning/laundry worker, janitor, window cleaner)?

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Pharmaceuticals – Are you interested in work related to:

- production/distribution (e.g. inventory control clerk, quality assurance co-ordinator, security specialist)?
- research and development (e.g. pharmacologist, production assistant, research scientist, research assistant)?
- sales and marketing (e.g. drug representative, foreign services representative, government relations co-ordinator, media liaison specialist, pharmacist, pharmacy technician)?

Public/Administration – Are you interested in work related to:

- community development (e.g. community development specialist, economic development officer, economist, politician, public administrator, social planner, social science and research assistant, urban planner)?
- community services (e.g. architect, architectural technologist, court reporter, foreign service officer, fundraiser, funeral director, immigration officer, historian, home economist, judge, judicial clerk, land titles examiner, legal assistant, letter carrier, lawyer, mediator, meteorologist, parole officer, pest control operator, postal clerk, real estate appraiser, refuse collector, religious leader, sign language interpreter, special events co-ordinator, volunteer co-ordinator)?
- culture/recreation (e.g. archivist, camp counsellor, curator, exhibit designer, expressive arts therapist, fitness instructor, librarian, library technician, museum technician, program leader, family entertainment centre manager, recreation and sports administrator, recreation co-ordinator/supervisor, recreation facility operator, recreation therapist)?
- human development (e.g. addictions counsellor, career development counsellor, community health representative, employment counsellor, early childhood educator, family/marriage counsellor, life coach, nanny, psychologist, social worker, wellness consultant, youth worker, gerontological specialist)?
- protection and safety (e.g. bylaw enforcement officer, corrections facility worker, customs officer, firefighter, occupational health and safety inspector, occupational hygienist, police officer, probation officer, public health inspector, safety codes officer, safety officer, security guard, security systems specialist, traffic safety co-ordinator, private investigator, vehicle safety inspector)?

Retail Trade – Are you interested in work related to:

- department store/large specialty operations (e.g. cashier, credit officer, customer service representative, equipment operator, human resources officer, inventory control clerk, marketing manager, merchandiser/buyer, sales associate, shipper/receiver, store manager/owner, storeroom worker, visual merchandiser)?
- grocery (e.g. baker, specialty baker, cashier, customer service representative, manager of departments such as bakery, dairy, meat, produce, pharmaceuticals or floral department, meat cutter, shelf stocker, store manager)?
- small specialty and independent business operations (e.g. auctioneer, cashier, photographic processing technician, real estate salesperson, sales clerk, security alarm installer, service station attendant, shoe repairer, small business owner/operator, store manager, tailor/dressmaker)?

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Telecommunications – Are you interested in work related to:

- manufacturing (e.g. electronics assemblers and fabricators, electrical engineer, electrical engineering technologist, industrial engineer, lead hand, machine operator, manufacturing engineer, millwright, production controller, repair technician)?
- service providers (e.g. communication electrician, computer engineer, telephone operator, installer, planner, programmer, satellite controller)?
- user organizations (e.g. planner, switchboard operator/supervisor, telecom analyst/consultant, telecom assistant, trainer)?

Tourism and Hospitality – Are you interested in work related to:

- accommodation (e.g. bed and breakfast operator, concierge, desk clerk, executive housekeeper, fitness and recreation co-ordinator, guest services attendant, hotel manager, lifeguard, personnel manager, reservations specialist, room/housekeeping attendant, security specialist)?
- attractions and tourism services (e.g. archivist, conservation/restoration technician, curator, historian, safety inspector, tour guide, translator/interpreter)?
- events and conferences (e.g. banquet/catering manager, market research analyst, public relations consultant, special events co-ordinator, ticket sales clerk)?
- food and beverage (e.g. baker, bartender, chef, food and beverage server, kitchen helper, maître d', restaurant manager, short order cook)?
- transportation/adventure/travel (e.g. adventure guide, bus driver, outdoor guide, outfitter, ticket agent, tour guide, travel consultant, travel guide)?

Trades and Construction – Are you interested in work related to:

- mechanical/electronic maintenance and repair (e.g. appliance service technician, auto body technician, automotive service technician, avionics technologist, electrical rewind mechanic, electronic technician, heavy equipment technician, instrument mechanic, motorcycle mechanic, office machine technician, outdoor power equipment technician, power engineer, recreation vehicle service technician, refrigeration and air conditioning mechanic, transport refrigeration mechanic, vending machine repairer)?
- exterior construction (e.g. bricklayer, concrete finisher, carpenter, glazier, landscape gardener, roofer)?
- interior construction (e.g. cabinetmaker, carpenter, electrician, elevator constructor, floor covering installer, gasfitter, insulator, lather/interior systems mechanic, machinist, millwright, painter, plasterer, plumber, sheet metal worker, sprinkler systems installer, tilesetter)?
- site preparation and planning (e.g. crane/hoisting equipment operator, heavy equipment operator, structural engineer)?
- structural fabrication (e.g. boilermaker, carpenter, ironworker, steamfitter/pipefitter, structural steel and plate fitter, welder)?

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Transportation and Warehousing – Are you interested in work related to:

- air transport (e.g. air traffic controller, airframe specialist, airline pilot, airport administrator, airworthiness inspector, cargo handler, caterer, flight attendant, flight service specialist, helicopter pilot, maintenance worker, scheduler, ticket agent, tour guide)?
- marine transport (e.g. captain, cook, deck/engineering officer, deck hand, first/second mate, master, mechanic, mess person, oiler, pilot, radar specialist, underwater sonics specialist, welder)?
- rail transport (e.g. conductor, crew dispatcher, force timekeeper, locomotive engineer, mandatory rest clerk, rail car mechanic, rail traffic controller, steward, ticket clerk, train movement clerk, yardmaster)?
- road transport (e.g. billing/rate clerk, bus driver, cargo handler, chauffeur, civil engineer, courier, dispatcher, structural engineer (bridges), taxi driver, traffic manager, truck driver)?
- space transport (e.g. aerospace engineer, ceramic engineer, robotics technologist)?

Brainstorming Exercise #2

1. Invite several of your friends and allies to a brainstorming session—the more you invite, the better. Tell them you need their help identifying career options.

   Your brainstorming session can be a low-key, informal event with a couple of friends or you can get a whole group of friends together for an idea party. The idea party works best if you have allies who are making career decisions and would like to get input from the group, too. Everyone brings food and a dream they're pursuing. Divide the evening up equally so everyone gets a chance to have some brainstorming done for them.

   People who have tried different versions of brainstorming say that it's very rewarding to have their allies think up options for them.

2. Remind yourself and your allies of the cardinal rule of brainstorming: all suggestions must be recorded without judgement. Sometimes, silly comments or off-the-wall ideas turn into great suggestions. People piggyback new thoughts on others' suggestions. Anything that interrupts the free flow of ideas reduces the effectiveness of the exercise.

   Ask someone else to take notes while the group is brainstorming for you because you will probably be too busy listening.

3. Explain what you want to be doing, what you have done already and anything else that will get your allies involved in your quest. Share your vision of an ideal future for you and describe your most important assets. Wrap up your little speech with a statement about what you want to do. For example, "I need to think of ways I can make a living by riding my bike" or "I want to find out all the things I need to know to work on a sheep station in Australia." Ideas will start flying around the room!

   If one of your most important assets is a strong interest or background in a particular industry, ask the group to think about the different types of

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work that need to be done in that industry (or, in a particular aspect of that industry). For example, you might ask your allies to think of all the different kinds of research and development work that needs to be done in the environment industry. Don't be afraid to include offbeat sorts of work or work the group thinks should be done even if there isn't an occupational title for it yet.

Keep an open mind

Take note of your reactions to suggested work possibilities, particularly the ones you are inclined to brush aside and ignore. Ask yourself why you are eliminating those possibilities from serious consideration. Your reasons may be based on an accurate understanding of those work options or they may be based on outmoded stereotypes.

Be very wary of "yeah, but" reactions. For example, you might think:

- "Yeah, but all the jobs in retail are low paying."
- "Yeah, but all computer software developers are geeks."
- "Yeah, but nursing is for women, not men."
- "Yeah, but who enjoys working with their hands after they turn 40?"

"Yeah, but" reactions are usually based on generalizations that are worth examining more closely. If you reject a possibility too quickly, you deny yourself the opportunity to discover that your opinions about the occupation are based on incomplete, inaccurate or out-of-date information. In other words, you may be limiting yourself unnecessarily. You want to have multiple choices, not no choices left.

Exploring as many options as possible greatly increases your ability to "mix and match" information later on to discover, or even create, work possibilities that would be ideal for you.

INVESTIGATING WORK POSSIBILITIES

Unlike the real world, labour market information is generally organized into neat little occupational groups. But the world of work is becoming so complex that new occupations are emerging faster than they can be systematically researched and classified. You will probably find that, although you can find lots of valuable written information in print and on the Internet, the only way to find answers to some of your questions is to talk to people who work in the fields that interest you.

Exploring work possibilities is often as much of an emotional challenge for people as it is a challenge to their research capabilities. The desire to simplify the process by focusing on one attractive option, instead of keeping your eyes open for even more possibilities to add to your list, can be very strong. Naturally, we'd rather make a decision and get on with our lives than live with uncertainty. However, postponing a decision until after you have done your detective work can pay off in ways you can't even imagine now.

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One way to cope with uncertainty is to approach investigating work possibilities as though it were a treasure hunt. One bit of information leads to another which leads to yet another and so on...until you finally find one or more options that do more than sustain you for the moment, they move you closer to your dream.

Fear is probably the biggest emotional obstacle to successful career building. You may be reluctant to ask strangers about their work or to ask your allies for help because you fear rejection. Or, you may fear failure. Don't let these fears sabotage your search. Later, you will have time to fine-tune your plans and become comfortable with them. Right now, remember that one definition of success is "doing your very best to realize your dreams." The only way you can fail is to do nothing.

How to learn more about work possibilities

There are three ways to learn about work possibilities you already know exist and to discover more possibilities.

1. The easiest and quickest way is to read career information materials available on the Internet, in newspapers and magazines and in counselling offices and libraries. These print sources generally provide a good overview, but may not include local information and may be out of date.
2. Talk to people who are knowledgeable about the work and can give you an insider's perspective. It's a good idea to have done some reading first so you don't waste time asking questions easily answered by consulting print sources. You'll want to spend your time with people as constructively as possible by asking about the local situation or other things not covered in print materials.
3. The best way to learn about the work is to "try it on for size" by getting some related experience.

These three strategies are described in detail below. But first, here's a quick summary of the types of information you need to gather.

What you need to learn

There are probably a great many questions you need to answer before you can realistically assess whether any given work possibility will or will not take you closer to achieving your dreams. However, your questions will likely fall into three basic categories.

1. Questions about the work itself.

   Examples:

   - What does the work involve? What are the duties and responsibilities? What is a typical work day or week like?
   - Are people who do this type of work employed in one industry in particular or do they work in a number of related industries?
   - What are the hours of work? Is shift work required? Is the work seasonal, periodic or year-round?
   - What are the usual working conditions? Outdoors or indoors? Around noise, dust or fumes?

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2. Questions about what the work requires.

   Examples:

   - What are the minimum education requirements? Does everyone in the occupation have this minimum requirement or are there other ways to enter? What preparation do you recommend?
   - What skills or personal characteristics are needed to do well in this line of work?
   - Do you have to be licensed or certified to do this work? If so, what are the licensing or certification requirements?
   - How do you acquire the necessary skills and knowledge? Through on-the-job training? post-secondary education? apprenticeship?
   - If you need post-secondary education, where are suitable programs offered?

3. Questions about what the work can offer you.

   Examples:

   - What is the employment outlook for this type of work?
   - Are work opportunities in this line of work expanding, declining or remaining steady?
   - What is the starting salary? How much do experienced workers in this field earn?
   - What skills can you learn by doing this type of work?
   - What opportunities for growth and advancement are there? What is "entry-level" for this type of work?

Sources of information

Print sources

Most career counselling offices and public libraries have collections of career information materials, including "occupational" descriptions of different types of work. For example, Alberta Employment and Immigration service centres have a wide variety of audio-visual and computer-based resources as well as print materials.

Don't be shy about asking for help finding these materials—libraries and resource centres often organize their career planning materials somewhat differently. For example, career resource centres may have separate sections for:

- career planning (general guides such as *Multiple Choices* as well as resources designed specifically for Aboriginal people, immigrants, young people, older adults, women, people who have disabilities, etc.)
- job search (general guides, business directories, industry profiles and information about resumés, interviews and other aspects of job search)
- business development (information about entrepreneurship, time management, human resources development and management, business communications)
- labour market trends (general, national, local and technological trends, graduate surveys, wage and salary surveys, occupational trends, educational training trends)

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- training/education (planning guides, directories of education programs, academic upgrading information, apprenticeship, post-secondary brochures and calendars, programs and services for diverse groups)
- occupations (Occupational Profiles, brochures from industries and associations and other information sheets).

Some centres organize occupational information in file folders; others use binders or other storage systems. Some use the National Occupational Classification coding system (often just called "the NOC") to organize occupational information; others use alphabetical systems. To use a NOC system, you have to look up the occupational title in an index to find its code (e.g. the code for Chemist is 2112, Chemical Engineer is 2134, Chemical Technologist is 2211). Similar occupations are grouped together so look at nearby information as well as the information you originally wanted—you may discover an even better work possibility than the one you started researching.

Public libraries and libraries in post-secondary institutions (universities, colleges and technical institutes) may have:

- brochures, pamphlets and newspaper clippings in one location (e.g. a set of filing cabinets)
- trade magazines and professional journals in another spot (e.g. with all the other periodicals)
- industry descriptions in a "Business Information" section
- government publications (e.g. this book) in a "Government Documents/ Publications" section
- career planning books produced by private publishers in the non-fiction section (classified according to the Dewey Decimal system in public libraries or the Library of Congress system in post-secondary institutions)
- newspapers somewhere else (probably near the magazines in the periodicals section).

Even if you think you have found most of the information about a particular occupation, it's a good idea to check with a librarian. If you describe the information you need and why you need it, you will probably get better service than if you simply ask for a particular publication.

Some career resource centres and libraries provide free public access to the Internet. However, there may be restrictions such as a time limit on how long you can use the computer. If you have ready access to the Internet, use your favourite search engines to look for information about work possibilities. Check often because home pages and new databases are added frequently.

Knowledgeable people

Occupational descriptions often contain enough information for you to be able to decide whether or not you are interested in learning more. If so, the next step is to find out more about what the work involves on a daily basis. For example, if you have read a general description of the work done by animal health technologists, you probably know enough to decide whether or not the occupation interests you

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but don't really know what it would be like to do the work on a day-to-day basis. If you talk to animal health technologists, particularly in their work environments, you are bound to learn things not included in a general occupational description. For example, you may come face to face with the reality that animal health technologists often see animals in pain or that they work in an environment that smells of antiseptics. Information like that may be very important to you.

To find knowledgeable people to interview, ask your friends and allies for referrals. Who do they know who is connected to the types of work on your list? People you know may be able to introduce you to:

- people who do the work
- people who train others to do the work
- people who work in the same industry
- others who may know these people.

Or, instead of waiting to be introduced, you can contact people by telephone and mention the name of the person who referred you. Briefly explain who you are and why you are calling. Then ask to arrange a meeting.

- When people agree to set up a meeting, ask if it would be possible to meet in their working environment. It is more convenient for them and more informative for you. Arrange a time that is most convenient for them.
- When people indicate that they are very busy and would prefer to just answer a few questions over the phone, ask if now would be convenient or if you should call back at a specific time.
- If people decline, accept their refusal graciously. You have lost nothing by asking and will at least make a good impression if you are courteous. If you do choose the same line of work, you may meet again.

Before you pick up the phone, have a few questions ready in case the person you are calling suggests that you conduct the interview right then over the telephone. Ask your most important questions first so you are sure to get the answers before you run out of time.

Both you and the people you talk to will be more relaxed if you are prepared to have a real conversation, instead of peppering the person with questions as an interviewer might do. People who really love what they do and are passionate about it, also love talking about their work. The best way to get them started is to go straight to the heart with a question such as "Do you enjoy working as a _____?" followed by "Why?".

Your conversation may be very interesting, but don't forget the time. Limit your discussion to 10 to 15 minutes unless the person encourages you to continue—you may be using the person's coffee break time. When closing your conversation, let the person know that you appreciate the time and information they've given you.

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As soon as possible after each meeting, do two things:

1. Take some time to think about what you have learned. Can you picture yourself doing similar work? Would you feel comfortable in a similar working environment? Do your values, beliefs and interests seem to fit?
2. Write and send a thank-you note telling the person what you learned that was most valuable to you. This is not just good manners. It could also be the first step toward a new relationship. The person you've met could become a valuable link to volunteer work or a job-shadowing experience or even become an ally.

Personal experience

When you want to buy a car, you may begin your search by consulting consumers' guides and talking to people. But you'll also want to take the car for a test drive to get a feel for how it handles and rides. Similarly, the best way to get a feel for how well you would like working in an occupation is to work or volunteer in that field.

You may not be able to do the work itself, but you can at least experience the working environment first-hand. For example, you can't perform surgery without proper training, but you might be able to:

- find a part-time or temporary job in a hospital or clinic. If you are a student, you can gain additional skills and knowledge as well as income by looking for summer or part-time work that is related to occupations you are considering.
- do volunteer work in a health care setting. You'll be providing valuable services while you are finding out what it's like to work in that environment. At the same time, you will meet people who can become valuable allies.
- arrange a "job-shadowing" experience in which you follow a worker around to observe the work.

If you are currently employed, another option is to volunteer for special tasks or projects that are related to a work possibility you are considering.

Getting some first-hand experience will be valuable, whether or not you choose to pursue the work option. If you decide that the work isn't for you, you will have saved yourself time and perhaps money that might otherwise have been spent pursuing that option. If you decide that it is for you, you will have developed some valuable relationships in your future field of work.

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MULTIPLE Choices

Who would have anticipated working as a Webmaster even ten years ago? Most of the people who have become webmasters never went to "webmaster school"—they have come from other occupations and acquired their Internet knowledge through reading, communicating with others, learning on the job and attending seminars. Because they were interested, they just kept on learning.

MIXING AND MATCHING INFORMATION

Technological advances are rapidly changing the world of work as we complete the transition from the Industrial Age to the Information Age. Many old, familiar types of work are disappearing, but many new types are emerging at the same time. To make the transition successfully, we as individuals have to be able to "mix and match" information about our personal career assets, current work possibilities and emerging possibilities on an ongoing basis.

Mixing and matching career assets is much like mixing and matching pieces of clothing in your wardrobe. When you are deciding what to wear, you think about your planned activities and select clothes accordingly. For example, you would choose very different pieces of clothing if you were planning to go swimming than you would if you were going to a graduation ceremony. Likewise, when you are deciding where to go from here in your career, you review your personal career assets and determine which ones are most applicable to the types of work possibilities you are considering.

To carry the analogy further, let's assume that you have several outfits in your closet that are made up of pieces you purchased together and usually wear together. You may also have some clothes that don't really go with anything you like to wear. They hang there, unused, until you deliberately look for something to wear with them. When you do, you sometimes discover that you can create new combinations that are very stylish, without buying any new clothes.

Just as the items in your closet can be combined in different ways, your personal assets can be mixed and matched to fit different situations. However, it takes a deliberate effort to break out of familiar, comfortable patterns of thinking. The following examples describe how three people "mixed and matched" their assets to discover work possibilities not apparent to them before.

Robert had to break away from thinking of himself as a teacher to identify different work possibilities.

> Robert left a job teaching high school and started teaching at a local college. It seemed like a good idea because he had all kinds of teaching skills but was feeling stuck in a rut. But, after teaching at the college for a few years, he still felt the same way. When he looked more closely at his personal assets, he realized that he was thinking of himself only as a teacher. So he separated the role of teacher into its various parts and came up with:
>
> - speaking in public
> - writing materials
> - entertaining
> - developing and following training plans
> - researching new developments in a subject area
> - preparing interesting lectures
> - listening to students who are having difficulties
> - using computer applications.

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When he identified his main values as variety, challenge, creativity and independence, he realized why he quickly became dissatisfied. He was not fulfilling his most important values through his work. In particular, he wanted to be able to work more independently.

Instead of looking for a new teaching role, Robert started looking for ways he could put his skills from teaching together to qualify for a different type of work. After doing some brainstorming, Robert had a list of more than 40 work possibilities to research!

Linda can't work as a hair stylist any more for health-related reasons.

Linda loved her work as a hair stylist. She established a successful salon and developed lots of great relationships with customers, hair stylists and other salon owners. However, her allergies to the chemicals used to perm and colour hair got progressively worse. For awhile, all she had to do was be really careful about using rubber gloves, but then she had several severe asthma attacks triggered by fumes from the chemicals. Her doctor strongly recommended that she find a different line of work.

Linda enjoyed being her own boss so she wanted to identify work possibilities that allowed her to continue working independently. Her values also included working with precision and accuracy. When she combined that information with her interest in computers, she got an idea. Her contacts in the beauty culture industry would be a great asset for setting up a home-based business offering word processing, record keeping and/or bookkeeping services for other salon owners. Money from the sale of her salon would cover the costs of training, equipment, software and her living expenses until her new business was well established. Still, she would rather put the money toward her retirement so she plans to have an "idea party" to see if she and her friends can come up with some other possibilities.

Sandy is trying to choose a career direction that would indicate which post-secondary education program she should take.

Sandy likes learning about the environment, English literature (especially Jane Austen's novels) and people's health. She values family, creativity and independence. She listed her three highest interest areas as mountain biking, writing stories and investing. Some of the skills she wants to use in her work are explaining, persuading, listening, advising/counselling, initiating and visualizing/imagining.

Sandy and two good friends brainstormed a list of possible work opportunities. They started by looking at four industries: retail, personal services, business services and entertainment. Then Sandy gave her friends more information about her ideal future and her important personal assets. Because they know and respect her, Sandy's friends encouraged her to add talents and personal characteristics to her assets list. They thought she was being too humble. By the end of the evening, they had listed the following possibilities:

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- investment counselling
- banking
- setting up libraries
- newspaper editing
- magazine editing
- publishing
- rare books dealer
- advertising writer
- healthy lifestyles counsellor
- recreation facilities manager
- television specialty channels writer
- owning or managing retail stores
- managing art galleries
- radio and television programmer
- museum curator
- public relations consultant
- trainer of athletes
- manager of a health food store

Sandy doesn't know much about several possibilities on the list so her friends gave her the names of some people to call for first-hand information. In the meantime, Sandy is going to look for print sources of information about the occupations on her list and look for related occupations as well.

YOUR WORK POSSIBILITIES

Identifying work possibilities is an ongoing process, just as identifying your personal career assets is an ongoing process. As you identify and explore work possibilities, add information to your portfolio about:

- what you learn about yourself from your reactions to suggested work possibilities
- the work possibilities you identify
- what you learn from your research.

Even if you decide not to pursue a particular option right now, you may want to take another look at it sometime in the future. Of course, you will want to update the information at that point, but some information such as the NOC number and the names of the people you contacted may still be useful.

Despite your best efforts to keep adding more options to your list of work possibilities, your list will eventually get shorter. As you learn more about different work possibilities, you will eliminate some from serious consideration. Once your list has been reduced to a few promising possibilities, you are ready to make the multiple choices required to choose a path and start moving in that direction.

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RELATED RESOURCES

The following resources, also produced by Alberta Employment and Immigration, are available at Alberta Employment and Immigration service centres located throughout Alberta. You can view, order or download a copy at **alis.alberta.ca/publications**. Or, contact the Learning Resources Centre by telephone at 780-427-5775 or by fax 780-422-9750.

Finding Out: How to get the information you need to make the choices you want

This booklet describes, in depth, where and how to gather information about career options. It's full of handy tips (e.g. how to leave effective messages on voice mail), examples of real people using research to get their career planning on target, even scripts for handling challenging situations like cold calls.

Job Seeker's Handbook: An introductory guide to finding work

This basic guide to finding entry-level work is aimed at readers who are new to the job search process. It features sample cover letters and resumés, tips for completing an application form and interview preparation questions.

Making Sense of Labour Market Information

What is labour market information? Why do you need it? Where do you find it? This book provides examples of how to use labour market information when making career, learning and employment decisions.

OCCinfo

Over 500 different occupations are described in a collection of Occupational Profiles available on the Internet at the OCCinfo website, **alis.alberta.ca/occinfo**. Search the OCCinfo database using a variety of topics like title, industry, NOC number, education and training, occupational growth, apprenticeship trades, lifting limitations, interests, high school subjects and post-secondary fields of study.

Self-Employment: Is it for me?

This book outlines the benefits and challenges of self-employment, and explores various forms of self-employment such as consulting, contracting and entrepreneurship. Self-assessment exercises help you determine if you have the characteristics shared by successful entrepreneurs and, if not, how you might acquire some of them.

Time To Choose… a post-secondary education program

This introduction to the post-secondary education system in Alberta includes charts indicating the programs offered by universities, colleges, technical institutes and other publicly-funded post-secondary institutions in the province. This book also includes lots of great tips about education planning and how to pay for your education.

Tip Sheets

For quick easy-to-read tips about career planning, education and job search, visit **alis.alberta.ca/tips** and search by keyword or audience.

Volunteering: How to build your career by helping others

This book describes the many benefits volunteering offers young people as a career-building strategy for gaining experience, adding new skills, making contacts and researching career ideas.

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CHAPTER 4

Taking action

This chapter is about manoeuvering: setting goals, developing strategies for achieving those goals and putting your plans into action. Chapters 2 and 3 are primarily about meandering: exploring your personal career assets and related work possibilities. Information about how to meander and manoeuver is provided in separate chapters, but that doesn't mean that you can't meander and manoeuver at the same time. You can.

Career building is essentially a process of making multiple choices, not one big choice. But still, some decisions are bigger than others. If you need to choose a career direction for the first time or want to significantly change the direction of your career, you have some major manoeuvering to do. Your objective should be to make the most advantageous choices, given your current situation and the realities in your life—not to make a decision that will bind you to a particular path for the rest of your life (even if you choose to follow a religious calling, you won't have to take binding vows until you are sure you are ready for them). You can't go back in time, but you can change the direction of your career at any time.

> For example, if you choose to pursue an occupation that requires a period of education and training, you can still change your mind after you have started the training. You may decide to switch programs or stay in the same program but add courses that will give you greater flexibility. Once you have completed your training, you will still have lots of room to manoeuvre. Always, there will be other types of work in which your training and experience would be useful.

This chapter describes how to:

- set goals and develop strategies for reaching those goals
- develop future scenarios to help you anticipate and cope with a variety of eventualities
- recognize ways you may be sabotaging your own efforts
- pursue the things you need to do to move toward your goals (e.g. get the education and training you need).

SETTING GOALS

No doubt, you will reconsider your goals and plans many times in your career. Sometimes, only minor adjustments will be required; other times, major adjustments will have to be made to redirect the course of your career. Making those adjustments is a lot easier if you have a clear picture of where you want to be in the long run.

If you have completed the "What have you dreamed of doing?" exercises in Chapter 2, you have a head start on defining your long term goal. Pull out your portfolio and review your description of the ideal work/life for you. Take some time to expand on it or change it, and add more detail.

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- What kind of work do you want to do? What would you find most satisfying about your work? What would you have to do to qualify for this type of work?
- Where do you want to work? Would achieving this work environment involve moving? Does it have other planning implications?
- Who or what type of people do you want to associate with? Are they different than the people you currently know and work with? What would you have to do to build the types of relationships you want?
- What kind of lifestyle do you want? How much money would you have to earn in a year to support your desired lifestyle? What will you have to do to ensure that you will be able to earn that amount?

Once you have a mental picture of the life you would like to build, ask yourself if achieving that dream is worth the time and trouble it would take. You may never fully realize your goal, but you can gradually get closer. Your dream must be sufficiently motivating to keep you moving in that direction.

If your dream "would be nice" but you don't want it enough to put in the time and effort required, look for other ways to define what you really want. Until you know where you want to go, it's very hard to decide how to get there!

If your dream of an ideal future is significantly different than your current situation, achieving that goal may seem like a giant leap that is well beyond your capabilities. Not so! The trick is to break your long-term goal into short-term ones. If your short-term goals are still a little scary, break them down into even shorter-term goals until you have a series of comfortable steps that lead toward your ideal future. Each short-term goal becomes a decision point as you work toward your goal—you have the option of taking the next step or choosing to change your plans and pursue a different dream.

Is there anything you could do right now that would move you closer to achieving your ideal future? For example, if your ideal future includes work that requires education or training that you don't have, what can you do that would move you closer to your long term goal? Even if you are working full-time right now, something you can do within the next few days would be to find out what is required to obtain the necessary education or training. Do you need a high school or college diploma or just specific courses? If you don't have the required courses, your next step would be to research your education options. You might be able to take night classes or distance education courses, or you might be able to simply take an exam to demonstrate that you already have the required knowledge. Then you apply for the most suitable option and so on. You will still have lots more decisions to make, but you can take some first steps toward your goal within the next week.

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Set daily goals

Make a list of things you can do to keep yourself focused on your ideal future. Your list may include activities such as:

- reading an article about a work possibility that interests you
- going to meetings, conferences or public lectures on related topics
- joining and participating in Internet discussion groups related to interesting work possibilities
- completing assignments in upgrading courses
- making a point of meeting someone involved in an occupation that interests you.

The idea is that at the end of each day, you want to be able to point to something you did that day that took you further along the path toward your long-term goal.

Set short-term goals

Short-term goals are larger steps that move you toward your ideal future. A series of short-term goals form an action plan.

Your short-term goals should be:

- **s**pecific (stated in down-to-earth language that says exactly what you are going to do)
- **m**easurable (so you will know when you have accomplished them)
- **a**chievable
- **r**ealistic
- **t**ime certain (each goal should have a deadline or completion date)
- **s**upported by your allies (especially those such as your spouse/family who will be directly affected by your decisions).

Together, the first letters of these guidelines spell the word "smarts." Using the "smarts" criteria, write down two short-term goals you can accomplish within three to twelve months. Date this record of your intentions and add it to your portfolio.

Short-term goals are necessary to keep up your momentum. If you stop taking action, you run the risk of getting stuck. The longer you wait, the harder it is to get going again.

Pursuing short-term goals generates the momentum you need to keep moving along your career path while at the same time maintaining the flexibility you need to explore new opportunities as they arise. Once you start pursing your goals, you may find yourself in the right place at the right time to take advantage of chance events. If you have done the work involved in getting to know yourself and exploring various work possibilities, you will recognize these events as the opportunities they are.

I'm a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work the more I have of it.
—Thomas Jefferson

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BUILDING SCENARIOS

Senior business managers invest many hours in crafting vision statements about where they want to take their organizations in the next three to five years. Then they develop organizational goals and objectives based on what has to be accomplished to achieve their vision. When you describe your vision of an ideal future and decide what you have to do to make that dream a reality, you are essentially doing the same thing.

Building scenarios is another strategic planning technique that businesses and not-for-profit organizations have used successfully for years. It's a way of anticipating what might happen if the organization took a particular action. For example, company managers in the process of deciding whether to invest money in producing a new product can anticipate at least three different future scenarios:

- consumer demand for the new product will stay about the same as it is now
- demand for the product will increase
- demand will decrease.

Having anticipated these possibilities, managers can decide what impact each scenario would have on the organization and how that impact could be managed successfully. Then, no matter what happens in the future, they have an appropriate response ready to put into action.

In the same way, building scenarios can help you to anticipate changes that would affect your career and develop strategies for coping with those possibilities. For example, you can decide what you will do if the demand for the type of services you want to offer increases in the future, decreases or stays at its current level. First, you have to find out what the current level of demand is and what factors might influence demand in the future. Then, decide how you will reach your short-term goals if demand stays the same, how you will recognize a change in the level of demand and what you will do if demand increases or decreases.

Don't ignore the possibility that your plans may work out better than you thought they would! If that happens, having a strategy already worked out can make it possible for you to take advantage of opportunities that might otherwise have passed you by.

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CONFRONT YOUR WHAT-IFS

Scenario building is a good way to confront and deal with any nagging doubts you may have. Doubts often surface in the form of "What if" questions. For example, what if I am not accepted? What if I fail? What if I run out of money? What if I can't find work?

Most people are pretty good at imagining what can go wrong so you probably won't have any trouble coming up with some worst case scenarios. But don't forget to develop best case scenarios too. For example, if you are working in a hotel dining room and want to move up to a supervisory position because your dream is to own and run a restaurant, you could imagine the following two scenarios.

- The worst case scenario might be that you approach your boss and she says something like, "You have no experience so you aren't ready to move into a supervisory position."
- Your best case scenario might be that your boss offers you an opportunity to become a management trainee.

Don't let the fears associated with your worst case scenario slow you down. Ask yourself what you can do to avoid your worst case scenario and what you will do if it happens. Then adjust your strategies for achieving your short-term goals accordingly.

Likewise, ask yourself what you will do if your best case scenario comes true. We don't usually assume that our plans will go faster, easier or better than we hoped, but it is a possibility worth considering. Developing best case scenarios helps to clarify your thinking about what you really want to happen.

John Lennon wrote, "Life is what happens while you are making other plans." It's true—things almost never go the way we plan. All the same, planning is a smart thing to do because it gets you moving, deciding and taking action. And it's only by doing that you meet people, hear about new opportunities and manage to be in the right place when chance events present new opportunities.

Unfortunately, even when we believe that planning is a good thing, we often find ourselves reluctant to do it. If that describes how you are feeling at this point, the following information may help.

RECOGNIZE RESISTANCE

When you are setting goals, making decisions and starting to "get the ball rolling," chances are you will experience some resistance—from yourself as well as others. It's natural. It's the way we protect ourselves from the unknown. Making changes is always risky and stressful and our genes have been programmed from the dawn of civilization to either flee or fight.

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MULTIPLE Choices

We all have our own ways of fleeing or fighting change in our lives. In fact, we can be amazingly creative when it comes to sabotaging ourselves by fabricating barriers. For example, do the following "flee or fight" responses sound familiar?

- "I'm really good at starting projects, but not so hot at finishing."
- "By the time the kids are in bed, I'm too tired to do anything for myself."
- "Whenever I have something important to do, a million trivial things seem to need doing right away."
- "I'd really love to … (fill in the blank) … but I'm too old (or whatever) to do that now."

You are almost sure to encounter resistance when you are developing and implementing career plans, so it's a good idea to anticipate resistance and decide how you are going to deal with it. Examine your "resistance style" and look for ways to work around it. The following suggestions may help.

1. Talk to your allies and find out how they handle the situation when they encounter resistance (their own or resistance from others). Ask them to help you draw up some workable plans for staying on task and achieving your goals.
2. Make the first task on your "To Do" list for accomplishing each short-term goal something really easy so it won't be hard to get started. Or, instead of making enough time to tackle a goal all at once, break it up into small tasks that can each be accomplished in a short time. Then do one task a day. Or, try setting aside a certain amount of time each day for working toward your career goals, and do whatever you can in that block of time.
3. When you make some progress toward your goal, reward yourself with a small indulgence—a walk by the river, a movie you've been wanting to see, a visit with a friend—whatever you can afford that would please you.

Look at your short-term goals. Are you prepared to get started working on them right away? Or is your fight or flight mechanism already kicking in? If so, head off your resistance right now. List all your reasons for not taking the actions you have planned.

When you have listed all your reasons, separate the real barriers (e.g. I don't have enough money to pay the tuition yet) from the perceived ones (e.g. I am too young to do that). Confront the perceived barriers and recognize that they are excuses, not real barriers. Then decide how you are going to overcome the real barriers (e.g. get a part-time job or apply for a student loan).

When you know how you are going to deal with the real barriers, reframe the beliefs behind the perceived barriers. For help with this, see the "What beliefs are influencing your behaviour?" section in Chapter 2.

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KEEP ON LEARNING

If change is a constant in our lives, and it is, then learning and adapting must also be constant. As time passes, you will discover more about what you need to learn to build your career. As you acquire knowledge and skills, you will probably find that they are precisely the preparation you need for work possibilities that will take you closer to your dream.

Continuous learning does not mean continuous schooling. It means building your skills and knowledge by reading, attending workshops, learning at your workplace and anything else you do to learn informally. Even if achieving your goals will require you to go back to school for a time, that should be only one part of your learning strategy.

The following exercise will help you determine the best ways to learn what you need to know to achieve your goals.

Your personal learning strategy

To develop a personal learning strategy that helps you adapt and take advantage of the opportunities change presents, you need to:

1. determine your learning needs
2. acquire the skills and knowledge you need
3. practice using your skills and apply what you have learned
4. challenge yourself to become a master (if that level of skill is needed to achieve your goals).

Step 1: Determine your learning needs.

Look at your short-term goals and ask yourself the following questions:

- What do I need to learn to accomplish each goal?
- What do I need to learn first? Next?
- How well do I have to learn each task?

When you have that figured out, there are two more important questions to consider:

- What types of support will I need?
- What types of learning situations fit my learning style?

You may need moral support from people who bring out the best in you by believing in you and encouraging you. Or, you may need a role model who can show you how to do something, or a coach—someone who is able to offer encouragement as well as one-on-one instruction. Or, you may need financial support.

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To identify learning situations that are a good fit for you, review your past learning experiences. Ask yourself where and when you enjoyed learning and learned well. For example, if you have acquired some computer skills, did you attend a seminar or course, have you asked other people to show you how to do things, did you learn on your own through trial and error or did you use all three methods? Which way of learning did you enjoy most? Which way did you learn the most? Can you use your most enjoyable and best ways of learning to acquire the skills and knowledge you need to move closer to your ideal future?

Step 2: Acquire the skills and knowledge you need.

You can acquire competence or the ability to perform a task by:

- taking a formal training program
- attending seminars
- reading workbooks/manuals
- getting one-on-one instruction.

Step 3: Apply your new skills and knowledge and get comfortable with using them.

Use and apply the knowledge and skills you have acquired! Ask for feedback on your performance to make sure you are using your new skills correctly. Attend related conferences or seminars, read related journals or newsletters, join a group or association that promotes learning in your field, talk to experts in the field (Internet access makes this easier).

One way to apply a new skill is to join a "learning team" of people who also want to practice. For example, Toastmasters clubs are learning teams of people who want to practice their public speaking and listening skills.

Step 4: Challenge your competency if you need to really master a skill to achieve your career goals.

To move toward your ideal future, you may need to become a "master" at a task or competency. Masters create new ways of doing things and pass their skills and knowledge on to others.

To become a master at the skills you have acquired and applied, you have to challenge them. For example, you might:

- take more courses and become even more knowledgeable and skilled
- prepare and deliver speeches at conferences
- write articles for journals or newsletters
- help others acquire the skills you have developed.

Create your own learning strategy by deciding what knowledge and skills you need, how you plan to acquire them, how you will apply them and, if necessary, how you will challenge them. Review and revise your plans as you go along.

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YOUR GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Add your notes about long-term and short-term goals and how you plan to achieve those goals to your portfolio. Include your scenarios and strategies, your plans for dealing with resistance and your learning strategy.

Whenever you feel like you are spinning your wheels and not getting anywhere, review your goals and the progress you have made toward them. It may just be that you need to break your goals down further so it's more noticeable that you are actually making progress.

If you really aren't making much progress, ask yourself why.

- If your vision of an ideal future just isn't compelling enough to really inspire you, you may need to do more meandering before you are ready to redefine your dream.
- If you have been sabotaging yourself, review the Recognize Resistance section of this chapter and decide how you are going to get moving faster.

Or, you may have chosen to take a detour for some reason. That's OK. Sometimes, it's necessary to make a decision that actually moves you away from your ideal future instead of moving you closer to it. The following story illustrates this point.

> Lee lives on a farm and owns a horse. He wants to be an animal health technologist and started taking an animal health technology program at a college in a nearby city. Then his truck broke down. Lee doesn't have enough money to fix his truck and pay his tuition and expenses as well. He doesn't want to move into the city to go to school. So he's going to look for full-time work, stay on at the farm, get his truck fixed and return to his studies next year.

Lee may be temporarily moving away from his ideal future, but he feels that he is making the best decision for him at this time. To stay focused and positive, he plans to do some reading related to animal health technology and volunteer to work with a 4-H horse club. He might even volunteer to assist a local veterinarian for a few hours each week.

That's the key to building a successful career in our rapidly changing world: having a dream and staying focused on that dream but, at the same time, being prepared to shift gears, even change direction as the need arises.

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RELATED RESOURCES

The following resources, also produced by Alberta Employment and Immigration, are available at Alberta Employment and Immigration service centres located throughout Alberta. You can view, order or download a copy at **alis.alberta.ca/publications**. Or, contact the Learning Resources Centre by telephone at 780-427-5775 or by fax 780-422-9750.

Adult Back to School Planner

This book helps you answer lots of questions about going back to school as an adult. It discusses topics such as childcare and studying and suggests ways to cope with typical concerns of adult students.

Education and Training Planner

This book will help the reader who already has a goal in mind. It talks about the education and training programs in Alberta and how to get more information. It provides sample questions to ask counsellors and discusses budgeting and financial planning.

EDinfo

A comprehensive directory of educational programs offered at private and public post-secondary institutions and vocational schools in Alberta is available on the Internet at the EDinfo website, **alis.alberta.ca/edinfo**. You can search for educational programs offered at post-secondary institutions in Alberta by keyword, categories or NOC numbers. You can also search for distance learning programs in Western Canada.

Money 101

Straight talk for youth about reasons to continue your education, what it will cost and ways to pay for it, banking, budgeting, the pitfalls of plastic and other money basics, and stretching your dollars.

Stretch Your Dollars: Budgeting basics

This book provides helpful budgeting tips and suggestions to cut expenses and boost income.

Tip Sheets

For quick easy-to-read tips about career planning, education and job search, visit **alis.alberta.ca/tips** and search by keyword or audience.

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Building your career... one choice at a time

If you have done much of the work recommended in *Multiple Choices*, you have accomplished a great deal.

Congratulations!

- You have a good understanding of your personal career assets. Now you can continue to build on them and recombine them in ways that are directly relevant to new work possibilities.
- You know how to research existing and emerging work and learning possibilities by finding current information and gathering insights from your allies.
- You can take a greater degree of control over your life because you know how to make well-informed choices, develop short-term goals and create an action plan for accomplishing those goals. You also know how to build scenarios to make coping with change much easier.

Now, it's time to take action! As author Roger von Oech put it, "If you want to be a singer, don't think about wanting to be a singer, go sing. Sing in the shower. Sing for friends. Join the choir. Sing for free. Go do it!"

No matter what happens in the future, one thing is certain: you will continue to have multiple choices to make. Keep this guide in your portfolio and review what you have learned about career building whenever necessary. Make your portfolio an active file, one that is used repeatedly and kept up to date—don't make it an archive file that is just a record of the planning you did at one time in your career.

Know what you want and keep on meandering and manoeuvring to get as close as possible to achieving your ideal future.

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FEEDBACK

We'd like to hear from you...

Multiple Choices: Planning your career for the 21st century

Date _____

Send your comments to the address or fax number provided at the bottom of this page.

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